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THE

WHEEL

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THE WHEEL:

A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

THE WHEEL

A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

BY

M. URQUHART

AUTHOR OF

"A Tragedy in Commonplace"

"High device is still the highest force,
And he who holds the secret of the Wheel
May make the rivers do what work he would."

George Eliot.

LONDON

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THE WHEEL:

A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS.

CHAPTER I.

It was sunset. Where sky touched sea there hung a violet veil, but beyond the sand-hills the heavens were red with leaping flames. The beach was still in the lighter end of twilight, before day joins hands with darkness and beckons the wraiths from the dunes to their shadow-dance along the shore. After the breathless August day the sands rested dim and cool, waiting through the jewel hour for the peace of night.

A boy sat in the shelter of the dunes, watching the incoming sea. He had burrowed a cup-shaped nook for himself in the sand, after the fashion of primitive man throughout the world, kin to the rabbits in the warren near. Fenced in by marram grass and leafless thorns, he watched breathlessly the birth of night across the sea.

The tide crept in, lessening the unwashed levels of the sand, blotting out the coloured pools, turning adrift the lumps of weed, the dried star-fish, and fragments of drift-wood. But the boy watched beyond these things, letting the tide of his thoughts run out with each wave, to flood his consciousness with its return.

As he leaned forward in the gathering twilight, he saw another mood of his wonder, the sea, not in the stealthy ripples of this evening hour, but one mass of yellow foam raging its way across the sand-dunes through the marshes to the distant mere, with spume flying over the low field-levels, as though it tossed the foam from maddened lips.

On such a night his father had been drowned as he led his cattle home to safety from the marshes. The boy felt as though he watched the gallantry of that hopeless fight with death, before man and beast went down beneath the fury of the sea. His eyes lighted up as his ears held the roar of its hunger; then his mind curved to the lonely little graveyard, where the salt-stained tombstones stood. He saw one leaning against the wall, rank grass overgrowing the once shapely mound. "Peter Blake" was cut on that tombstone, with the recording date. Lower down ran the legend: "And of Mary Blake, his wife, who by the mercy of the Lord was withdrawn from the sorrows of this world in the twenty-ninth year of her age. In Thee is my trust."

One date stood for both names, and on the same day Dominick Blake first opened his eyes to a stormy world. "A child of the sea," they called him in the village, in remembrance of the double robbery.

And the sea drew him as though it knew its power and used its magic. There seemed conscious antagonism between the two, as if each watched and weighed the other in a rigorous balance. Daily the boy measured his strength against his enemy, rolling in the breakers in the worst weather, wandering along the shore at the treacherous turn of the tide, challenging the fate which he knew was waiting for him under the blue waters.

mind, a younger face, but with the same wind-blown hair and questioning eyes. He puzzled over it for a while, knitting his straight black brows in a violent effort to trace the likeness home. But the face eluded him, and he shut up the case once more in the safety of his pocket.

Dusky violet shadows painted the marsh behind the sand-hills, save where the gash of gold in the horizon was imaged in the shallow pools, or where the red flames of sunset lit reflected fires in the brown wet mosses and tufts of faded sorrel. Dominick knew the path well, each twist and turn it made as it slid its narrow length among the grass tussocks and brown moss hags; where it hid itself behind a clump of rag-wort, where it made way for a trickling sweet-water stream, and where, at last, it ended by the big black gate which kept the cattle from straying on its parent white road.

Dominick walked slowly over the wide marsh meadows, fancifully and indefinitely dreaming dreams. The sunset gilded the threads woven by patient spiders from grass-blade to grass-blade, webbing the width of the marsh in a haze of gold. "Our Lady's threads," they call them in the sunshine of Provençe, unwound from the infinite spool of the sun; but in the grey Norfolk marshes they become the handwork of the Norns, those silent Virgins of the North, and they weave the mist-gilt gossamers into the life-threads of those in Norton-by-the-Sea.

Dominick drew in the thought by feeling rather than by understanding, realizing little more than the sheen of the gilded marsh, and the intangible sorrow which shadowed it. Something in the long, grey distance called to his nature, something in the waste places laid hands upon his soul. Fate walks in the marshes of Norton, and those who have

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door. Dominick turned the loose handle with instinctive caution, and went in.

A meal of some kind was spread on a table in the middle of the room, and by it sat a girl in a rocking-chair, her face silhouetted by the lamp behind her head. A patchwork cushion in brilliant colours added value to the depths of her grand black hair, and she leaned back with a grace bred in the beauty of her making, the supple ease of a perfectly made and perfectly healthy body. Her eyes were as blue and as enigmatic as the sea.

The room, with its tarnished, dented silver, its half-dozen miniatures hung from nails at the back of the chimney-piece, and its solid furniture, reflected part of the life-story of the Blakes. Mary often pleased herself by the tale of the ancient glories of their house. How her mother, an heiress in village eyes, owner of land in the shape of a farm and a few acres, scantly stocked with flocks and herds, had met and under romantic circumstances had been wooed and wedded by an Irish gentleman. A gentleman, truly, cut off from his people, without two coppers to rub together in his rather threadbare pockets, but a gentleman still. And Mary Bullen had put her whole trust and confidence in her handsome husband, departing this life in the twenty-ninth year of her age, with gratitude to the Lord for His mercy in taking her whither that husband had gone.

They had lived their seven years of married life in much good fellowship; the wife worshipped the husband, and succeeded beyond all expectation in keeping him out of mischief; saw to his comforts, shut her eyes to his failings, and felt God recognized his necessities when He took her to fulfil her duties in another world than this. But Peter's children, with some inherited characteristics, were

left to fight their battles and to make their way alone.

Till the last year an aunt kept house for them, ordering all their ways with a firm hand; saving for the future with that thrift which strips the present of half its joys, and closing her eyes, at last, with the sense of duty sternly done by motherless children. Neither Mary nor Dominick sorrowed much as they followed her coffin to the little graveyard by the sea. And her glorious sense of independence was still new to Mary, marred only by advice, which she called interference, from judicious friends.

The Blakes were well-to-do, with money put by, and rent paid regularly by the tenant of the farm. The dead aunt arranged the letting of it, a piece of presumption Mary resented to the last. She held her head high when she thought of her ancestry, feeding her own mind, and trying to fill Dominick's, with a sense of their superiority over the world around. She wished to live in accordance with her ideals, and these were extravagantly comic—or, perhaps, pathetic—in the daughter of a sturdy farm-wife and an Irish adventurer. In her mind she dreamed of her destiny, fairy-tale dreaming, brimful of wild ambitions, wilder unrealities, wildest princes, while she chafed at the barren years and her wasted beauty in her narrow village life.

Education she had none. During the twelve years of her aunt's dominance she had gained nothing beyond the training of a small private school, where her lavish nature suffered in an atmosphere of dubious gentility, and where certain strange seeds were sown to flower and fruit in her years of womanhood.

Dominick also attended a private school, learning there a little Latin of the same quality as the

English he misused. His career ended with an abrupt loss of temper on the side of teacher and taught, when each attacked the other with the weapons of his craft. It was the master who scored Dominick's shoulders with his cane, but it was Dominick who subsequently flung the pewter ink-pot with a deadly aim. His shoulders lost their weals, but there was one mark the master could produce at the Resurrection. Since that war, some six months back, education and Dominick were not on speaking terms. His shabby books went undusted on the shelf beside the fire, side by side with older volumes, some with the Trinity College arms on their bindings, relics of the day when Peter Blake believed he studied for the Irish Bar, and took a prize or two by way of proving the worth of the Blakes when they gave their minds to anything.

And Dominick inherited the ability, with a strange sense of the power of knowledge. He despised from the deeps of a hot heart and a wilful head his late teacher and all his ways; despised him all the more because, boy as he was, he could not help measuring himself against him, and finding his own worth. Remembered the weak hesitations, the furtive peeping into cribs and keys, and the petty tyranny that had gone to make his school-hours such a burden to him; and, remembering, had taken his own way out of the trouble, much as Peter Blake, his father, took it aforetime.

Amid the wreckage and the memories sat Mary, with her beautiful black head pressed against the crumpled patchwork cushion, and her blue eyes staring across the room, as though she waited the coming of some wraith from out the gorgeous past, or listened to some fairy music that only she could hear.

She stretched out a long arm to the boy. "Have you been mooning on the beach as usual?" she asked him lazily. Beneath the drawl of the Norfolk speech lingered a riper roundness, a fuller depth of tone, a heritage from her father's land.

"I found something there." Dominick rummaged in his pocket as he spoke, and brought forth the wooden case. His voice was like his sister's in its caressive vowel sounds. Both sounded indescribably tone-rich in the land of the nasal twang.

Mary leaned over him as he opened it, and took it in her hand. "It's something like that Drury child," she said, and tossed it on the table. The case bounced to the floor; Dominick disappeared in search of it.

"You needn't chuck it about, if it is," he observed, as he pulled his chair into its place.

"If you think you're going to sit down with me in that state, you're mistaken," was Mary's inapposite reply. "Be off with you, and change your clothes directly."

Dominick pleaded, but his sister pointed to the door. "If you can't remember anything else, at least, don't forget your father was a gentleman," she said.

"You make me wish enough he wasn't," retorted the boy, as he went with grudging obedience to his room. As he climbed the narrow stairs he could hear the maid at work in the kitchen, clattering the pots and pans with more noise than diligence. She had been imported since their aunt's time. Aunt Julia was contented with a day-woman; Mary was more ambitious. "We always had two servants at the farm," she said, nor remembered the work done by her mother's busy hands.

Dominick's toilette was a quick business, a hasty

wash, a still more hasty brush, and a struggle from his shore-going clothes into a tighter and more respectable suit. Then, sharp-set, he tore down stairs again to the little dining parlour. Boiled chicken and bacon smoked on the table, and from the kitchen drifted the pleasant scent of raspberry pie. "Bless God for these His mercies," said Dominick piously, and fell to.

Mary sat, eating little, but watching her brother with pleasure in her eyes. In her way she was proud of his possibilities, of the promise of life that seemed to shine in him. "Are you thinking of taking that thing to the farm?" she asked, as she pushed aside her plate.

"I don't know." Dominick understood his sister's ways.

"I'm sure it belongs to them," she went on; "it's so like the child."

"Would you rather I left it at the post office; they're sure to put up a notice?" Dominick asked cautiously.

Mary looked impatient. "We don't want to wait till they offer a reward," she said, and smiled as Dominick flinched.

"I'll take it to the farm," he answered.

"To-night?" asked Mary idly.

"Well, it's not much after eight, is it? and I can run it in three minutes."

"But you won't run; you always dawdle." Mary spoke without reproach.

"Well, I'll run to-night, if I'm leaving you alone and dull," said Dominick, and wondered why he did not think of her more often.

Mary laughed, and twisted the length of chain she wore. Her blue blouse was slightly open at the throat, and each curve of her beautiful neck was seen; it looked like old ivory in the amber lamp-

light. "Conceited boy," she said; "I doubt if you could keep the dulls away! No; I'm going to run up to the Vicarage for an hour. It's the glee class, you know, and they said I was to be sure to come. I expect Mrs. Stone is beginning to find out the worth of a contralto voice at last. Finish your cider, and be off, there's a good boy. And don't be late."

She watched him go with the thought that she had him well in hand, in spite of prophecy. Dominick was through the gate before she opened the door.

CHAPTER II.

BULLEN'S FARM had never changed its name, in spite of Peter Blake's efforts to re-christen it. The village of Norton was strictly Conservative in that respect, though it naturally voted in the Liberal interest. It would not hear of "Blake's Farm" —a modern insult to an age-old house. "Ther've bin Bullens ther afore yewr day, and it'll be Bullen's long arter yewr underground," said the voice of the Oracle with trenchant logic. And Bullen's it remained, as it had been in the days when some poor relation of the ill-fated Ann took up his standing on its hundred acres.

Many of those acres had passed from Bullen's keeping with the years—some into the hands of higher lords of the soil, some fallen into disused marsh, some swallowed by the sea. The sea dogged the fate of the Bullens at Norton.

Seen by daylight, the house stood raised on an artificial mound above the mere, with only a stretch of garden and a belt of pines between it and the thirty acres of weed-grown water. It was a timber and brick-built house, the warm bricks glowing like ripe fruit between the blackened beams. Little was left of the original building; an outhouse or two, perhaps, stood as they stood in Tudor times, and there were signs of some dignity in the kitchen walls. For the rest, additions and im-

provements played their usual destructive part, and only store rooms, apple rooms and granaries whispered of high revelry, or echoed phantom toasts to the ill-fated Queen.

The surrounding flower-garden stood below a one-time terrace: a crumbling red-brick wall topped by a broken balustrade; and from each side of the four-square house a flight of uneven stone steps led to the formal grass plots, box hedges, and mossy bowling-greens. Dominick had but to run down the road away from the sea, and pass through the old gateway up to the house—six minutes at the outside, even if he dawdled, or had trouble with the rusty gate in its slow swing over the flagstones. He remembered how Mary used to hold him up to the gate in his baby days, and let him press his face against the rusty iron; seemed to hear her telling him confused stories of magnificence, legends of mythical Blakes and their mighty deeds. And in some shadowy way Dominick was proud of his ancestry—people who had dared so much and so successfully.

To-night he took the longer, more romantic way across the close-shorn dew-wet hay-fields, over the bending plank which spanned an outlet from the Broad; by the copse, where in earlier summer the nightingales sang their hearts out to the moon; under the shadow of the stately firs, and so past the mere up to the house, to meet it full and fair in the wide moonlight.

A spit of reed-fringed land ran out into the water, a landing-place for boats. Dominick stood a while on the moon-silvered grass, watching the play of light on the water. Loneliness brooded over the still surface, unresponsive sky and waiting earth, the waste of land and water crying for pity to a dead god.

The sorrow of the place surged into the boy's heart as he stood watching, a sorrow that seemed a prophecy of evil, definite evil, inevitable pain. To end it he flung a stone with all his force into the waveless Broad. It broke the track of the moonbeams in spattering light; the reeds rustled as myriads of birds flew screaming from their beds. A mallard skimmed away across the surface of the water, a duck splashed heavily in flight from its hidden foe. The spell was broken; life woke out of the death-like stillness.

"How dare you desecrate the beautiful silence?" asked a voice behind him. It seemed to come out of the shadows, and through Dominick's mind fear drove his flock of phantoms. The Waterman, or Mere Fairy, who waits for the unwary at the edge of the Broad; the "Drummer," whose sad tale is told in twenty villages round—which face would meet him when he turned his head? He held a second stone in his hand by way of precaution, and took a step or two back delicately.

"I hate a dumb thing," he said, sullen in his fear.

The owner of the voice drew from the shadow into the moonlight. He seemed tall and thin, with over-much weight of hair and beard; but he was human. Dominick breathed again.

"To some people silence is heaven, and sound hell," the voice said quietly.

Dominick recognized the speaker. Dr. Drury had a fearful charm for the boy—the attraction of antagonism, evil and fascinating. Village tales fostered it; he hoped fearfully that the tales were true.

"You must be Dominick Blake?" the doctor said, looking at the boy under the curve of his hand.

"I am Dominick Blake."

"I thought so. No other boy in this district would put himself in the mad doctor's clutches—at the full of the moon, too!" A thin thread of laughter escaped him, a sound like the bubbling echo in a haunted well, a phantom of a laugh.

Dominick produced his treasure trove. "I found this in the sea. It's like Honor; so I think, perhaps, it's yours," he said shyly, as he gave the case into the doctor's hands.

"Nay, the honour is yours, inasmuch as it is more blessed to give than to receive," the doctor murmured. "And you came up the haunted path? Verily, this place is bringing forth marvels. What brought you this way? Was it to admire the effect of moonlight on your property, or, perchance, was it to poach? I hired the fishing rights."

"I didn't poach, and I never thought about it being my property."

"Well, master landowner, honour your tenant by entering your ancestral halls. And *en route*, if you can, please gratify me by telling me why you came by the Broad, instead of the more usual way by the front gate."

Dominick looked round for inspiration; Dr. Drury compelled truth. "I don't know why," he said at last; "to see how it looked by moonlight, p'raps. P'raps, too, cos I knew the other boys daren't do it."

"Oblige me: the word 'perhaps' is dis-syllabic. The sound must echo the sense. Delicate division of the syllables at once creates an atmosphere of doubt—you catch my point? So you came, possibly, because other boys are less brave than yourself; possibly, also, that you might assure yourself of your own courage; equally possibly, though you may not recognize it, to commune with Nature in her beautiful silences?"

The words woke a sleeping thought in Dominick's mind. Surely Nature found another voice under the moonlight than that which she used by day. Perhaps if he had listened longer to that harmony, not destroyed it by his own act——

They walked together up the broad pathway to the moonlit house, their distorted shadows flung before them like uncouth gnomes to lead the way. It looked the ruin of a once great house. Right and left of the panelled hall carved doors led into dark old sunken sitting-rooms, mildewed with decrepit age. Yet Dominick felt a little thrill of pride as he caught sight of the date on the high stone fire-place, and told himself that his forbears on either side had borne an honourable name.

His host motioned him to a chair, then leaned towards the lamp-light and opened the wooden case. The hard face softened and the lines relaxed as he looked at the miniature. He looked suddenly younger, as though love stripped him of his years.

"I am grateful," he said simply.

Dominick looked a little abashed; he felt as if he had seen by accident a secret room. But in the glimpse he knew the doctor was no longer terrible to him.

"Honor dropped it on the sands," the doctor said, without a pause, as he laid the open case upon the table, "and we had given up all hope of its recovery. You must be a favourite of the sea. It is rare that anything should be reclaimed from her."

"Perhaps she feels she owes me two lives," said Dominick, dropping at once into the use of the pronoun. The thought appealed to him, brought a picture to his ready mind; there seemed something feminine in the treachery of the sea, something of a beautiful great striped tiger-cat basking in the

sunshine. His eyes deepened as the thought took hold of him.

"She owes me no debt," answered the doctor thoughtfully, and looked at the boy with quickening interest. His was not an ordinary face, apart from its dark beauty; it seemed too attentive in expression, attentive to something beyond its own experience; the face of one who in riper years may catch the magic voices of the underworld.

"Let me see," the doctor went on, as he filled the bowl of a long cherry-wood pipe, "you must be twelve or thirteen years old now, are you not?"

"Thirteen last March."

"And at school?"

Dominick's face flushed heavily, and he shook his head. A grim smile twitched at the heavy moustache as the doctor noticed it. "I had forgotten that little episode," he said; "but what are the school inspectors doing?"

Knowing nothing of the strange tribe, Dominick held his peace.

"You object to learning?" the doctor asked.

"I'm not such a fool," said Dominick bluntly.

"Only to certain methods of instruction?"

Dominick nodded.

"My sympathies are entirely with you, but certain actions shut certain gates."

"He corrected exercises with a crib!" Dominick's voice was rich in scorn.

"So—and taught you to say 'p'raps,' and improved your tempers by thrashing you. It's education of a kind." The doctor puffed at his pipe, his strange eyes glowing.

Dominick listened with expectant interest to the ironic voice, waiting with a certainty of something strange to come. He forgot the face that bent

over the miniature, he felt the promise of riches in his adventure. Already in imagination he explained to less daring spirits his own exceeding courage.

"And so you do not rejoice in your ignorance?" the doctor asked. Apparently he was turning over some definite thought in the hidden places of his mind.

"I don't rejoice; I want to know," stammered Dominick, and looked full into the glowing eyes.

"I congratulate you; it is a rare state of mind. How do I strike you—the simile is perhaps unfortunate—in the light of a schoolmaster? You may not know that I set apart a portion of my day to teaching my child. A father has certain duties irrespective of the sex of that child, and the presence of another learner is stimulative. You have done me some service to-day. You seem to be something other than an ordinary fool. In all seriousness, I offer you a share in that teaching."

The tone threatened Dominick. All the old tales of the strange doctor rang suddenly in his ears; all the legends rife in the village of his unholy rites and ceremonies. He felt as if he might be called on to swear an impious silence.

Apparently the doctor read his thoughts. "Observe the shape of my boots," he remarked pleasantly. "No one could hide anything like a cloven hoof in them. I don't demand your soul, merely your strict attention, strictly in your own interest."

Dominick's thoughts reddened his face. "It seems a lot for you to do for me," he said.

"The doing will be more yours than mine," replied the doctor. "Remember, the two hours a day you spend with me does not end your work; it but shows you the road. Your preparation is under your own control, the responsibility yours; you can use your opportunities as you wish. I have

only one method. If you don't come up to my standard I wash my hands of you. I don't keep a school for backward and troublesome boys."

It seemed little gratitude to say "Thank you!" even with fervour and some fluency. There might be doubts abroad about the doctor's orthodoxy; —there were none about his brains, mad or not.

"The gates are open for you," said the doctor; "don't let them clang in your face."

Dominick rushed home by the legitimate way as though his feet were shod with wings. Sudden ambitions ran riot through his mind, the ambition of the Blakes beckoned him. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge hung within arm-stretch; best of all, it all depended on himself. Resolution gripped his soul. "I will know everything," he vowed to the attentive stars. And the stars twinkled with smiles at his large ignorance.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Dr. Drury first took up his dwelling in Norton-by-the-Sea the village was largely agitated by his arrival. It had always got on very well without a doctor, people said. There was old Master Sparrow, who dispensed brewed herbs impartially to cows and men; there was also Mrs. Orridge, if wives needed her, and a white witch lived at Barton for consultation should love matters go agley. As a last resource there was the vicar, who attended to marriages of the regular order, occasional christenings, and frequent funerals. Thus the village was fully guarded against all assaults of flesh and devil. The parson took care of them on Sunday; weekday ills were provided for by lay defenders. Dr. Roger Drury was an impertinent interloper in their eyes.

But when it became known that his degree was taken in literature, and not in medicine, the village chose to feel itself aggrieved; and for a thoroughly mystifying sense of grievance an East Anglian will beat a Celt any day of the week. "He must 'a' done summat," said the village, in a tone leaving no doubt of that something's quality. He had no right to come flourishing himself among their holy places; he had no right to proclaim himself a doctor when he wasn't one. There was no end to the infringement of these sacred rights.

His pew—the Bullen pew—was empty Sunday

after Sunday. The man wasn't even a Christian, then; and, if he wasn't an infidel, he was probably a "black papisher" disguised. Opinions were divided as to the lesser evil.

On principle the boys of the one party stoned the papisher when they met him; and on principle, likewise the rest fled from the infidel. Infidels were the same as ogres, and ate children; old Master Sparrow said so. And the parson prayed against them on special Sundays and holy days, when their triumph seemed to urge a counteracting spell.

When the parson prayed, all the heads in church turned to the Bullen pew, and all minds ran with a sense of congratulation to their personal safety. Yet here and there a heart pitied Honor, and put up a prayer for her on their own account, and not of a comminatory kind.

For ten years the village eyed Dr. Drury with suspicion, hating him for a certain aloof courtesy that was his, and for the unexpressed indifference with which he went his own way, regardless of its prejudice. And as there is nothing so stimulative as a lively hatred, Norton concerned itself about Dr. Drury to the exclusion of other matters. The village Oracle suspected him as a political spy, set on by some tyrant in the House of Commons to subvert Liberal interests and destroy its principles. There seemed no other reason to write to Members of Parliament, even if they were personal friends, and visited Norton when the House was up. Norton was keenly political, and some of the Ministers—hard-working, fairly honest men, according to their lights—were more amazed than pleased at the curiosity they excited when they stayed at Bullen's Farm from Saturday to Monday, fished in the mere, or went round the links at Brackney

for the good pleasure of their souls. No good thing came out of Bullen's Farm, said the village, and scowled on Sabbath-breaking over its frothing pewters. Norton never voted for "such-like," and used salt language concerning them.

When voters sent old Lord Trimingham's son and heir to the "House," they sent him because he was a gallant Liberal, and the son of his father, and quite imagined he lived under Big Ben from one election to another, wotting nothing of Eaton Square. Their man was in Parliament, sent there by the working men to look after their interests. At each succeeding election he assured them it was his only aim in life. In the intervals they saw little of Lord Bacton, then mostly on horseback in a pink coat, rather muddy about the shoulders.

Nobility and gentry surrounded Norton. North, south, east, and west lay big estates, strictly preserved as to coverts, boundary touching boundary, with never a Naboth's vineyard in between. Upstarts there were none; the youngest house had stood its couple of hundred years, the newest title had worn its bloom off three centuries ago. Norton and the neighbourhood had a right to feel a decent pride. It hated mushrooms, save those which grew in its own long, damp meadows, and went to Norwich market in due season by the first cart in the dawning.

Its pride and glory was its Duke, chiefly invisible, for whom the shrill air was too strong, and the surroundings too overladen with marsh vapours for safe harbourage for ducal bones. No one much wished to see him, least of all his agents, who made merry in his absence after their kind; nor the gardeners, who profited by their labours, and whose market baskets also went to Norwich with the mushrooms.

The Duke yachted from Eagre in the Isle of Wight, where the upkeep of his place would have supported a hospital, staff and all, in luxury; shot at Barr, in Yorkshire, or Dunlo, in Scotland, according to his mood and the season of the year; went abroad when other folk went, and filled in his spare time at the old place when nothing else beckoned him, or when hospitality on a royal scale seemed indicated by the powers above him.

The Duke hated his grim old barrack of a place, partly because it was dull, partly because propriety took his hand at the doorway and led him in over the expensive and virtuous carpets into the fierce light of his native land, where he behaved circumspectly, and had no notion that anything was known of him or his doings other than he chose to tell. He had no sons, to whom an example might be due, and he despised his next of kin, a phthisical boy of two-and-twenty, who kept the little life within him with the prudence of one who knows his large inheritance. Six months of his uncle's customs would have settled his chances; he lived the strait life of a saint, with his eyes elsewhere than on heaven.

Naturally, as Dr. Drury knew none of these superior home manufactures, his other friendships weighed as straws in village scales. Yet to a certain section of men he was as great an oracle as was old Master Sparrow to Norton-by-the-Sea. Each gained his position by the simplest of means —knowing rather more of one special subject than did his neighbours. Norton went to Master-Sparrow when its cows and horses, sheep and dogs, or itself, felt the need of medicine. Men went to Dr. Drury as an authority on Danish remains, runes, doom-circles, spell-charms, and the many superstitions that troubled the minds of the giants

of old days. His book, "The Evolution of National Character," was in the course of making, but the last ten years had taken him no further than the phase of superstition which dominated the actions of men. He studied character as another man may study bacteria or beetles; he was quite as eager to add to his collection. He had caught something abnormal in Dominick, and collected him immediately for his book. For he saw in the boy, bred of Celt and East Anglian, a flourishing specimen of innate superstition, fostered rather than checked by his education and surroundings.

In the intervals of his life-work Dr. Drury educated his only child. Honor Drury was a mistake; her father had designed a boy, when a cross-grained fate mocked his intentions. He forgave the child, but she was conscious always of her enormous deficiency; it seemed emphasized by the fact that no other woman set her foot across the threshold, a morbid tribute to a dead wife. All the work of the house was done by two Frenchmen, and done well, notwithstanding village doubts upon the subject.

Honor lived her own life, cut off from all society. In some children solitude breeds savagery, but it was otherwise with Honor. She was born courteous, as the doctor noted in his memorandum book; a child who would leave the pathway to a beetle, or apologize to a fly for the stickiness of the marmalade; one who found strange companionships in bird and beast, who firmly believed in their mutual understanding—a child who only once was known to weep, when a young lizard chose the way of death, uninfluenced by her arguments. "I might have been more tactful with him," she had sobbed.

That was a baby Honor, only six years old, not the Honor of to-day who made her way down the

crumbling terrace steps, supremely unconscious of her appearance and village comment on it. She was a tall, slight child, with a thistledown grace about her, and beautifully modelled little legs and feet. Her hair was cut to the level of her shoulders, and seemed blown back from her face. In her dream hours Honor had a pretty fancy that her dead mother's hands caressed her, with a leaf-light wind-stirred touch. There was nothing beautiful in her face beyond its refinement, the strength of the delicate lips and chin, the truth of the grave, grey eyes. There was something elfish about her, something elusive, till the eyes were reached; in their depths shone the promise of a splendid womanhood. The keen-eyed August sun shone full on her face without tanning or freckling its fine pallor; her short fair hair was hatless, and she wore a serge smock over a pair of knickerbockers, and a pair of sandals on her slim, straight feet.

So Dominick met her, as he walked soberly to his new duties, with his strap of carefully-dusted books under his arm. He had seen her dozens of times before, felt oddly ashamed for her in her unconventional dress, nervously apprehensive lest she should hear what was said about it; but now he looked at her in the light of a companion, with critically unfamiliar eyes.

She was as tall as himself, with as great a litheness in her lines. Dominick did not appreciate the promise of immaturity: he thought her rather an ugly little girl. She stopped by the stone pillar with its broken vase at the stair-foot; there was no shyness about her. "Good-morning," she said, and held out a slim, cool hand.

"Good-morning," he answered, more embarrassed than herself, with a sudden touch, too, of shame at the thought of doing lessons with a girl.

Then looked round with self-conscious suspicion that other eyes were watching him.

"We're to read by the mere this morning," Honor went on, as she helped a straggly insect in its journey to the ground. "Father sent me to tell you he will be there in half an hour."

"It sounds jolly," said Dominick; "but can you keep your mind fixed on what you're doing?"

"I can try," said Honor composedly. "Besides, father's is what he calls 'suggestive teaching,' and being out of doors helps it, I think. He gives us skeletons, and we fill them in by ourselves; look out details, you know, in books just as we choose. It's so much nicer than telling one all about it, and expecting us to remember, isn't it? To-day they will be open-air skeletons."

She walked gravely beside him, watching his impassive face, heavy with incomprehension. "Open-air skeletons?" repeated Dominick.

"Yes. Historical skeletons—ancient British, I think, to-day, for I saw him looking out a lot of celts and bosses."

Dominick looked an enquiry he was too proud to utter.

"I think old arms and ornaments quite the most interesting part of history, don't you?" Honor went on, with unconscious tact. "It makes one wonder what the people felt like when they wore them; you can see how vain some of them were, just by their ornaments. Father says dress is an outward and visible sign of character as well as of civilization."

Dominick was conscious of a certain inner struggle as he walked down the petal-strewn path in silence. Honesty won. "Is a celt a weapon?" he asked awkwardly. "I thought it was a race."

"Isn't it both?" asked Honor in her turn. "I'll

ask father, if you like. The celts I mean are bronze axes, dug up out of British tombs, not the people."

She was perfectly simple and direct in her explanation, quite devoid of any wish to spread herself to a more ignorant companion. Dominick probed further. "Won't your father mind your asking?" with acute memory of his own experience at other hands.

"Not a bit," said Honor readily, "if we only listen, and try to understand the answers. He's really rather good about explaining."

"But why does he show you celts and things; does it make history any easier?"

"Perhaps not to clever people," said Honor, as she avoided the path of a large worm, dragging its purple length across her way. "But I can take hold of it better if I see their things. It helps me if I look at the mere—it's so queer, isn't it? to think how old it is—and sometimes I feel as if I saw the old Britons taking a fleet of coracles through a passage in the reeds."

"And as if we lived there, too," said Dominick; "and it's a thousand years and more ago."

Honor met his eyes with understanding. Dominick outlived a spasm of shame at his self-revelation, and waited in defiance for a sneer or mocking word. Then he saw that his thoughts were Honor's thoughts, not derided like his fancies at school, driving him to excesses of anger, and subsequent disgrace.

"Does your father think history the most important lesson?" he asked, when they had gone a few paces further. His mind returned to useful subjects, commercial arithmetic, bills of parcels and the like, at school. Yards of wire fencing seemed to entangle the memories of a sum that never came right.

"Everything turns to history, doesn't it?" asked Honor. "Wait a moment, that's badly put." She sought inspiration in the tree-tops and the deep blue of the August sky. "I mean, every subject everywhere, is only a branch of history. If one thinks of books people write, they are only histories of thought, or character, or action. Father calls life a history of development, so I suppose it must be the most important lesson. I never thought of it before."

"Do you mean," said Dominick, at a standstill, "that you and I are people in history?"

Some deeper thought brooded for a moment in Honor's eyes. "We are kings and queens of our own lives," she said, without hesitation.

Dominick had a glimpse of her thought; it set him thinking too; yet he was more conscious of struggling than of sovereignty. Something restless stirred in his deeps, climbed on the shoulders of his ambitions, asserted itself on his notice. He shook it off.

They came to the boundary of the garden, railed in by bent and rusty iron railings, with a drop of a foot or two in depth into the ditch beyond. The ditch was a wide one, filled with dry brown leaves. Dominick's potential manhood asserted itself. He had listened to the wisdom of an interesting, though ugly, little girl long enough to put the coping-stone on her self-esteem. "Look here!" he cried exultantly. "Can you do this?" He took a short run, and leaped rail and ditch like a deer. Something stopped Honor from telling him it was her usual mode of exit; she scrambled over awkwardly instead. Dominick's self-importance was appeased; he turned graciously to the weaker vessel. "I expect you are quite a clever girl," he said, with ample patronage.

"Perhaps rather clever for a girl," corrected Honor. Her eyes looked rather wistfully across the stretch of sward, waving reeds, and dancing waters of the mere. "I ought to have been a boy, you know," she said. Her voice was resigned, not resentful.

"It does seem unfair," Dominick agreed.

Honor nodded. "But I've given up all hope of being able to change now," she answered. "I thought I might manage it before I was seven—your body changes altogether once in seven years, doesn't it? But after seven, I knew it was no good, I was too old. I'd got used to being a girl; it was a sort of habit, I suppose, or, perhaps, I didn't go the right way to work."

Dominick felt vaguely doubtful. "There must be some girls in the world," he said, by way of comfort.

"Yes, of course, to be mothers to boys. But father didn't want another boy's mother. He wanted a son." There was deep pity for the disappointed father in her voice, a curiously selfless pity.

"Well, no one could call it your fault," the comforter went on.

"I suppose not," said Honor doubtfully. "Perhaps I might have tried a little harder before I was seven; but one can't find out such a difficult thing for one's self, can one? It's not like father's skeletons."

"Perhaps not," said Dominick, thoughtfully dividing his syllables.

"So all I can do for poor father is to try to be as like a boy as possible, so that he shan't remember I'm only a girl."

The self-abnegation of the child gave Dominick a sense of discomforting impatience. There was

that in his blood which stirred against a mute acceptance of injustice. He felt a little angry with Honor, as though she showed cowardice; but a little sorry, too.

They reached the bank of the great mere, a sheet of sun-bright silver under the cloudless sky, and sat down under the shelter of a long-armed beech.

"Do tell me," said Dominick, "how you try to make yourself like a boy? Don't you do things that other girls do? What do you do that's different?"

Honor gathered her knees into her arms' embrace. "Everything's different," she declared valiantly. "Father says most women are vain, and always wonder about themselves, and whether other people will admire them. I don't, because it's silly, if one thinks it out. Girls play with dolls. I've never had a doll—father would have been amazed if I had wanted one! And I believe I think like a boy—don't you think I do, Dominick?"

"Can you play games?"

"I can run and swim and fence—Pierre was an attendant at a *salle d'armes*, and he taught me—and I can sail a boat—decently. Father says so; but, of course, I can't play cricket or football; there aren't enough of us."

Dominick turned the matter over in his mind. "Can you shoot?" he said.

Honor nodded. "I hit a bottle on a flower-pot four times out of six at ten yards," she answered, with her eyes on her judge.

Dominick's envy was hidden behind a stony face. "And can you fish?" he demanded.

Honor's hands unclasped themselves. "No," she said bluntly; "I hate killing things. I tried. I caught a dear little perch one day, and he was so game. He pulled and pulled, and fought so

for his life, that I felt a mean coward to think of killing him. So I just let him go, and tipped the rest of the bait into the water as a make-up."

She met Dominick's eyes bravely, though she read her condemnation there. "Oh, Honor, I'm afraid, after all, you're only a girl! An ordinary girl," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

MARY BLAKE walked home from the glee class at the Vicarage in a troubled state of mind. She had bent a certain stubborn pride that was hers to let Dominick have his way, and learn from Dr. Drury up at the farm, partly because the boy was urgent, partly because she thought association with gentlefolk would tide him over a critical time, and, for the third and largest reason, because she had all the superstitious reverence for learning of an ambitious, uncultured mind.

Dominick's education should be that of a "gentleman," even if it came to making friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness for its fulfilment. Mary had not much fear of unrighteousness; dead and gone Peter Blake had none. He was much more afraid of poverty, after a sup or two of its cold pottage; she, that others might think her poor. She felt her own imperfections acutely enough, covered her ignorance as decently as she could, and gave Dominick his way, shrewd to know it for the chance of a life-time, childishly eager to raise the Blake levels high above the lower Bullen herd. And with it all her heart beat more for notoriety than for fame. She coveted distinction less for its own sake than for the envy it excited. And she went out of her way to insist on the superiority of Dominick's position, classing

him apart from his old schoolfellows, speaking as if she had planned the matter, not as if it should be met with gratitude.

Perhaps Dominick showed his gratitude by his work. Young as he was, he met opportunity with understanding; and, because the work was in his own hands, he could do it, and do it well. He was driven by no one save himself; learnt the pride of work for its own sake without fear or bribery; and learnt other and far deeper lessons than those Greek and Latin wonders in which Mary took so much ambitious interest.

Dr. Drury told him his talents were on the far side of those of the average boy. Mary brooded over the compliment to the present; Dominick worked the harder for the future. Dr. Drury encouraged the first shoots of originality, pruned luxuriance with understanding, and, by the memory of his own boyhood, forbore to snub. Snubs shrivel young endeavours.

Mary was satisfied with the work, more than satisfied with Dominick's progress, a little amused at his thirst for knowledge, especially the solid parts that made little show and absorbed much energy; but all the more eager to proclaim them at the fitting time. The reception of her news at the Vicarage had been a shock.

As she plodded home across the fields, the dewy grass catching and damping the edges of her skirt, she pictured that reception once more. She was always more or less on her dignity at the Vicarage; because, though vicar and vicaress acknowledged the birthright of his blood to Peter Blake, they never forgot his wife had milked the cows and churned the butter with her own sun-freckled hands. The ancient glories of the house of Bullen went for nothing in their eyes. Mary Blake, the elder,

had been accustomed to stand up while the vicar spoke to her, unless he graciously bade her be seated on one of her own chairs in her own house. Both missed the tribute, when Peter Blake forbade that symbol of respect. All this the vicar's wife remembered, and Mary remembered it, too, and it added an air of defiance to her ease of manner under their roof.

She had told the vicar of Dominick's new scheme when results justified the telling, if not some improper pride. "I was so glad to keep him from running about with the village boys," she added with her little cultivated air of refinement.

The other glee singers were gone, but Mary lingered, as was her sanctioned custom. She waited, possibly to show her intimacy with the Vicarage before the village folk, certainly to avoid those folk on her homeward way. Mr. Stone had leaned ungracefully against the chimney-piece, on which the tawdry ornaments stood in knock-kneed irregularity, trifles in gilt wire and coloured glass. "It is, indeed, a kindness on Dr. Drury's part," he said, his respect for scholarship nicely tempered by priestly dignity; a reticence in tone, moreover, hinted doubt of that scholar's orthodoxy.

Mrs. Stone had been more explicit. "I've no doubt your brother will learn a great deal," she said; "but it must make you doubly watchful over him in other ways. You must make up your mind to send him twice to church on Sundays, and I think he ought to go to the Sunday school."

Mary wondered at her own self-control, as she thought it over. Not only to imply neglect, but to suggest that her brother, son of Peter Blake, should attend a Sunday school! Infidelity seemed a better portion than the means of salvation reserved for the "lower classes." Mary had no lowly rever-

ence; she recognised no betters, she was a law to herself. Her answer satisfied her dignity. "I could hardly forbid him to play on Monday with the boys who sat on the same bench with him on Sunday, could I?" she had said.

"We are all alike in the sight of Heaven," said the vicar solemnly. He moved his sharp shoulders, narrowing his chest in his own ungainly way. His wife raised her sallow, care-worn face. Mary watched it in the looking-glass, side by side with her own rich, softly-tinted reflection. And she wondered if Heaven's eyes were really so blind as to see no difference between them.

"Young people should never be above their station," said Mrs. Stone, with a severe glance. Perhaps she followed Mary's eyes and read her thought.

"I don't think I can forget I am my father's daughter," Mary had replied, reminding Mrs. Stone thereby of the Blakes' superior ancestry. It was as though she threw Mrs. Stone's paternal boots in her face. All the neighbourhood knew those boots, advertised to wear for ever. Sometimes Mrs. Stone wished them, soles and uppers, of less lasting material. The group did not part on very amicable terms. "The girl is getting absurdly set up," said Mrs. Stone.

Mary's way took her across the moonlit fields, a narrow path winding in and out among the silvered grass. The trees threw long shadows across the wide flat field; there was a sense of infinitude in the night, a more solemn sobriety than the place wore by day. Instead of soothing Mary, the feeling irritated her, subtly conveying her own exceeding unimportance by contrast with its large serenity.

Not a breath of wind stirred leaf or grass-blade;

earth slept in peace. But Mary's heart was awake in the pain of a growing sense of wrong. The little set-back to her self-esteem worked strangely on the elements of her nature. She craved the approval she was too weak to command, and she raged in her impotence at the denial of her due. In the secret chambers of her heart Mary wore a crown; there was a strain of barbaric ambition in her nature, and heart and looking-glass were flattering courtiers to her soul. Her mythical ancestry and her own beauty sang praises to her, heaping flowers on her altar every night, while daybreak brought again the quiet village and the sense of her dethronement. No uncrowned queen felt as bitter as Mary felt, with the strong stream of her father's blood running reckless in her veins.

If she could not convince the Stones of her importance, at least she could show them their opinion mattered nothing in her eyes. Formerly custom bred grudging allegiance to their views. Now she would set them at defiance and go her own way. She had boasted that nothing could make her forget she was her father's daughter, and that father had flung conventions overboard with a disdain that Mary thought regal. Sufficient selfishness has many masks. Mary believed her father's spirit pointed to his own superb example. The thought was enthralling; to be a law to herself, to be strong enough, as he was, to defy all man-made laws. How it widened all the world to her view! For the minute she seemed to stand alone in her strength, crying aloud her defiance to the stretch of starry skies.

She drew her skirts around her, as the grass grew thick and rank in the shadow of the hedge. A great elm stretched its arms over the stile, blotting the edges of the moon. Silence seemed to

breathe audibly in the greater darkness. She climbed the stile, and jumped to the ground below.

Here the path ran along the outskirts of a narrow belt of wood—Northwyk property—a broken fence divided it from the right of way. The moonlight guarded the sleeping trees, throwing their jagged purple shadows on the pathway. A cracking twig broke the silence like a pistol shot. Mary started, and a hare ran by, with ears laid back in fright. The next minute it seemed as if part of the shadow detached itself from the rest, and moved into the moonlight, where it resolved itself into the figure of a man.

"I'm afraid I frightened you," he said, and took off his cap.

In the moonlight Mary recognized the speaker, the tall figure, its high shoulders thrown into grotesque relief by the moonshine. "It was so sudden," she said, with a little laugh; her nerves were still on edge with her new sensations.

"I thought I had the place to myself," he said apologetically. "Norton doesn't appreciate its moonshine."

Mary looked round the fields appraisingly. Their familiar beauty said nothing to her, beyond once again quickening her defiance into life. For once there was a welcome absence of proprieties; it was a new sensation to stand there in the moonlight talking to a man. Any village girl could have given her points on the etiquette of such a meeting.

The man watched her, this wild, beautiful creature, untameable as the sea he heard threatening them in the distance.

"They're afraid of ghosts," she said.

"Ghosts!" he echoed, with a laugh. "Well, I've been here three nights this week, and I haven't

caught one yet. And you are the first human being who has caught me either."

"Am I? I couldn't help it; I suppose it's because I'm late to-night."

He held the dial of his watch under the moonlight; at the same time, from beyond the tree-tops, the church clock boomed out the hour. "Ten o'clock," cried Mary. "I'd no idea it was as late as that. Dominick will wonder what on earth has happened to me."

"Dominick should be here to see you home, unless you will let me take his place?" He could see she was in two minds about accepting his escort: she had all the shyness of a wild thing that masks itself in cunning. He speculated idly as to the shape of her thoughts, when she turned to him suddenly.

"Oh, you can come if you like," she said.

He fell into step beside her as the path broadened; he could hear the rustle of her skirts as they brushed the grass. She walked with a free, untrammelled movement, like some grand earth-goddess—Tellus rather than Artemis, he thought. He watched her dark profile against the sky, measuring with his eyes the beautiful strength of her lines.

He had been at Norton nearly a month, lodging in a little farm-house on the outskirts of the village, painting and rejoicing in the discovery of an unknown spot. Dominick's face had attracted him when they met by chance on the shore, and the history of the two orphans was full of romantic interest. David Murray had open eyes for the picturesque, wherever he met it.

They crossed the field quietly, silent in sympathy with the silence of the night. "This is a splendidly paintable place," said Murray at last,

"and apparently an inexhaustible one. Who would think that a few acres of water and marsh and wood could hide so many possibilities?"

Mary understood nothing of the speech.

"I suppose it's the atmosphere," Murray went on; "there's a kind of gorgeous savagery about it, a splendid isolation; the feeling makes one a rank pagan. It's as though one had jumped backwards a gulf of a thousand years."

Mary's silence was masterly, yet her heart beat time to the thought that lay below the words. She could understand a feeling better than she could see the possibilities of a sand-hill.

"Primitive," said Murray thoughtfully, "with the big simplicity that makes life and death seem easy matters. Oh, it's a splendid place!"

"If it wasn't for the people," cried Mary, with sudden passion.

"The people!" echoed Murray contemptuously. "Oh, ignore them, refuse to take them into account. Who are they to stand between you and your self-realization? Make your own kingdom, and reign over it yourself."

Again his words spread their wings beyond Mary's understanding. Yet she thrilled at the inbred lawlessness of the speech. The instinct chimed with her own. She looked round her at the open space sleeping in the sweet night air, and a lump rose in her throat.

"I'd give anything to live my life in my own way," she said, and felt as though some living thing within her breast leaped towards liberty. The passion in her voice made the man listen more attentively. He had but expressed his own vague discontent, bred of an afternoon wasted in bad work, not tried to wake an answering echo.

"Sometimes it seems as if one couldn't ignore

people," Mary said, at last, as they made their way into the road.

Murray shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, the voice of the world is naturally obtrusive, but one must learn to shut one's ears. Remember Odysseus, and his admirable dodge. Really, it all depends if you prefer the voice of the Immortals, or of public opinion—you must take your choice and abide by it." His own deity never spoke through the multitude; there was something more fascinating to him in the thought of the still, small voice, occult, secret, whispering to its initiates behind the veil.

But Mary's training gave her less thought of gods than men. Old restrictions clamoured for their due. Hers was calculated, not impulsive, defiance; she weighed her reasons, found them on the same side as her feelings, and prepared herself for battle.

"It's funny you should be saying such things to me to-night," she said; "because Mrs. Stone has just been trying to teach me my duty, and it makes me mad."

Again Murray shrugged his shoulders. "A very rigid conception of her neighbour's duty, no doubt," he said indifferently. "What a Pope that woman would make, given the appropriate change of sex; she has such a sublime belief in her own infallibility."

"She wanted me to send Dominick to the Sunday school," said Mary.

"I daresay his teachers would be astonished at his doctrine. I suppose she smelt heresy, didn't she?"

His amusement soothed Mary's pride; it was less difficult to be just when the suggestion was found laughable, instead of insulting. "Of course, I

don't mean to please her by doing it," she added rather quickly.

"Of course not; it's too great a temptation to put in a boy's way. I assure you, Miss Blake, that I date most, if not all, my sins from the day I learnt their fascinating meaning in a Bible-class."

"Well, I'm not going to let Mr. or Mrs. Stone interfere with Dominick's soul," said Mary; "or with mine, I can tell them that."

"I applaud your discretion," answered Murray.

They stopped at the cottage door. A bunch of roses, heavy with dew, swept Mary's face as she fumbled with the latch; the scent was irresistible. "You'll come in and rest a moment, won't you?" she said, as the door opened into the lighted hall. The scent reached him, too; he followed her. It was the first time he had set his foot across the threshold.

CHAPTER V.

DOMINICK's absence made Mary lonely. It seemed as if she had given him his freedom without counting the cost to herself. The hours he spent at the Farm lengthened daily; it became his habit to learn his lessons in the long book-lined library by Honor's side. He had a passion for finding out things for himself in his own way, and Honor was suggestive and not dogmatic. Between them Dr. Drury's skeletons were clothed in flesh and blood; even grammar took upon itself a semblance of humanity through the parentage of its words. The work was hard, but it was done on a method of their own which made some pleasure of the toil.

Mary understood nothing of all this, less of Dominick's ambitions; love of knowledge for its own sake was beyond the bounds of her imaginations. "I thought you'd have got a lot of learning polished up by this time," she said, when he read on for his own pleasure, and hunted out obscure allusions.

"We don't want polish," said the scholar haughtily; "we work to get at the truth."

"Little prigs," said Mary, speaking it, and felt herself despised.

Mary had no one in whom to confide, no outflow for her discontent. She had cast off the Stones, Dominick was lost to her; she felt lonely,

set on one side, without a friend. Circumstances drove her nearer Murray. He was always kind when they met, generally once or twice a week, by happy chance. Lately Mary had looked forward to those meetings; they broke the unspeakable monotony of her life. Her feeling for him was kin to Dominick's for Dr. Drury—interest, admiration, and a not unwholesome awe. He stood on a different level from her own; age, education, knowledge of life, separated their souls.

She met him once again on the sand-dunes, whither she had gone to walk off a growing discontent. The hills lessened in height as they ran away to the North, and beyond them there was a stretch of open country, marsh, cornfields, green meadows, and the blotted indigo trees which belted the mere. The sunlight danced on the white sand-hills, danced over the level sands and the lazy purple sea, bringing all things far and near into a dazzling, indefinite brilliance—the elusive shimmer of heat haze and sparkling light.

Mary came up from the marshes, past the red and brown cows and grazing sheep. Murray scowled diabolically on his work as she drew near. "Thank goodness you've come!" he said. "I believe you've saved me from suicide; I'm in despair this morning."

"What's the matter?" asked Mary, looking indifferently at the canvas.

"Everything's the matter," answered Murray. "Look on this picture, and on this." He waved a mahl-stick imperiously at the dancing wastes of sand and their elusive brilliance; then at his painting, at which he shook his fist. "There's no trick will do it. Look how it lives. Each separate grain of sand has got its own beastly individuality, and it won't stay to be caught! Look at that light,

flat on the face of the sand-hill, bleaching the grass as you look at it—neither white nor gold nor silver—and I can't paint in diamonds! Oh, if the gods would put a little strength into my brush, I'd die easy! Lord, only to paint it as I see it, the gorgeous, impossible truth!"

Mary sat down by his side. The sun-warmed sand caressed her; she stretched herself in a pleasant languor under the thin shade of the dunes. Backed by the powdered sheen of the sand-hill, her indigo dress and lavish colouring were gorgeously evident. Murray grunted as he looked at her. "You're definite enough, at any rate," he said.

Mary dug her fingers into the warm sand, with a lazy pleasure in its warmth. "I'm sorry you're not satisfied with what you've done," she answered, and his tone, more than his words, made mind as well as body more content. It was so splendid to feel valuable.

"Don't remind me of it," said Murray. "That kind of discontent is uncommonly bad for the temper, however it may physic the soul. Look here! I'm sick of dazzling elusiveness. Let me have tangible brilliance instead. Let me paint you?"

"Paint me?" Mary stared in whole-souled surprise. "I thought you only painted landscapes?"

"As a rule they have more character than human beings. But now and again the gods are kind—especially now." He spoke abstractedly, running his eyes over the loose blue bodice and long lines of figure. Mary felt her senses pricking her under the look.

"Will you let me?" Murray went on, as her possibilities dawned more definitely on him.

"I don't know," said Mary bluntly, with a wide look at the sea. She could not have explained her hesitation, nor the tangled contradictions in her mind; how the pride in her glorious body throbbed responsive to the appeal, nor how some untameable savage modesty resented the notion with a sense of angry shame.

Murray smiled as he watched her. To him her hesitation was exquisite, the struggle in her part of her fascination. She seemed an elemental force embodied. She was only to be won by storm. He felt he must win her. His eyes challenged hers more audaciously.

She turned away with a vague uneasiness under the closer personality of his look. Her bare black head, with its magnificent masses of hair, was towards him. His eyes valued the poise of her head, the stately shoulders, the long lines of back, the grandly modelled hips, the still grace of her attitude, as she leaned on her elbow and looked across the red-brown marshlands. Man, as well as artist, woke in him.

"You're not the build to be a coward," he said roughly.

Mary swung round on the sand and faced him. "What do you mean?" she asked. There was a stormy splendour in her eyes.

"You are weighing what you would like to do, with what you think people will say of you for doing it."

"I'm not. It's something in me myself."

Murray left his camp-stool, and sat down by her on the sand. He saw her gather her strength together with a sudden effort. Yet he looked reassuringly commonplace, with his neat flannel suit, grey-brown head, and bronzed face.

"It's instinct versus the proprieties," he said.

"You wouldn't have felt it if I'd asked you to bring your maid and sit to me in my studio. You are feeling the want of a chaperon."

Mary looked at him with uncomprehending eyes. "Is that it?" she asked; "it doesn't feel like it somehow. It doesn't sound the same."

"I can't make it sound the same in the great freedom of a place like this. Propriety confines itself to four walls. Look, out there"—he flung an arm to the long stretch of sand and the deep purple of the brooding sea, where the silver of a gull flashed in wide curves over the surface—"and ask yourself if one can remember conventionalities in such an atmosphere. As soon ask Mrs. Stone to teach me how to paint it! I wanted to paint you, because I thought I should find in you something grand enough to stand such a background. It would be too big for most people, but I believed it would fit you. Was I wrong? Just look at me, and tell me I'm impertinent in thinking of you, even for a moment, as a queen of a larger life, and I will presume no longer. The wish will die with the illusion."

The craving for power, the savage lust of conquest woke in Mary, overthrowing shamefaced instinct. The queen of a larger life! She felt as though she had all but thrown away her kingdom for the sake of some ill-defined prudery. He saw her quiver, as she lay coiled up on the sun-warmed sand, with a thrill of delicious apprehension.

"We aren't going to fight over it, are we?" he said.

"Of course not," answered Mary. "I was stupid. You see, I didn't understand."

"And your conscience is satisfied now?"

Again Mary flushed and turned restive. "Never mind about my conscience; that's my affair. I'm

doing nothing wrong. When do you want me to sit ? "

The lightest turn of her head was full of distinctive grace ; there were a hundred new beauties Murray had never seen before. " Sit ? " he echoed vaguely. " Oh, any time. It will be enough to look at you this morning."

There was a large recklessness about Mary which prevented vulgar coquetry. She sat up, clasped her hands in her lap, and looked out to sea. Their thoughts met in her next words : " I wonder what Mrs. Stone will say when she hears of it. She will be mad."

Murray stopped in the outline he was tracing with his finger in the sand. He sighed.

" She will talk more than ever about my vanity," went on Mary.

" She has an unhappy knack of vulgarizing a fine thing," said Murray, and went on with his outline. He had definite ideas as to the proclamation of his affairs from the house-tops, but he could not be the first to suggest silence and discretion to Mary.

Mary looked at him for a moment, then out to the horizon. One of his thoughts whispered to her consciousness. " She is an interfering old thing," she said vindictively.

" But not your chaperon ? " Murray's question suggested much.

" No, thank goodness," answered Mary ; " and I never would stand interference, and she knows it."

" It may be only comment."

" Nor comment either. I'm not responsible to her."

" I'm afraid she may not see your point."

" She can't comment on a thing she knows nothing about, can she ? " cried Mary, with incon-

sequent haste. "I'm not going to tell her, are you?"

Very slowly Murray smoothed the sand over the outlines he had drawn. He met her look frankly. "Much better keep the matter to ourselves," he said. "If it's a failure, who will be the wiser? If I succeed, the world is welcome to know, and we shan't have boasted inadvisedly." He waited a minute. "I never allow anyone to see my pictures before they're finished. I'm afraid I can't make an exception even in favour of Dominick, Miss Blake."

"Oh, it will be fun to surprise him!" was Mary's easy answer. "He doesn't see anything in me nowadays. His head's full of Greek, and the people at the Farm. I'm not complaining," she added quickly.

"I understand. Of course, you see the wisdom of it. He is at an age to want outside interests, and it is good for him that he should find them there."

"We all want outside interests," said Mary.

"Do I not know it to my advantage?"

"One wants somebody to stand by one in case of need," said Mary, frowning a little as she bit her lips. "I don't care for Honor Drury, but they'd both stand by Dominick if anything happened to me; they're that sort."

"What makes you dream of anything happening to you?" asked Murray.

Mary's eyes turned seawards once again. "Oh, in the midst of life we are in death," she said, with light mockery. "Besides, you don't suppose I'm going to stay here all my life, do you? Don't you think the sea gets weary of always thrashing on the same bit of shore? There's a lot of the sea in us Blakes."

"More life and fuller what I want," quoted Murray, almost unconsciously. He felt the sense of starvation in the girl's mind, a little of her hunger to be gone. For the moment, he felt her imprisonment, with the great sea between himself and the wider world.

"You deserve larger opportunities than you have here," he said, and meant it. Her beauty was too great to be hidden.

"I expect I will have to make them for myself," Mary answered, and meant it too. Already her prison walls seemed growing transparent, as they grow for captive princesses in fairy tales; already she told herself that she tasted the sweets of freedom.

Murray and she went down to the water's edge and stood on the firm sand. "Here's wishing it may come true," said Murray, as he stooped and filled his hands with water. Mary refused to drink.

"Sea water means unsatisfied desire," she said, from her nature lore. "Don't drink it, Mr. Murray."

Murray wetted his lips. "Anything for experience," he said cheerily; "he's the teacher who makes one an artist in life."

* * * * * *

It was an hour or so before he began a somewhat belated sketch of Mary's face.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. STONE looked out from the narrow window of her dining-room, across the village street. A big elm, and a low privet hedge secluded the house from the gaze of passers-by, but the higher level of the windows made her own view secure. She could watch all that took place on the village green—the children's games on the worn grass, the knot of gossips under the great oak, the half-open door of the smithy, over which the loungers leant in turn. Even through the closed windows she could smell the burnt horn and singed horse-hair, and hear the hiss of the red-hot iron as it met the water in the old stone trough—even mark the rising gouts of steam from the face of the water.

From her watch-tower she kept guard over Norton-by-the-Sea, and the village rewarded her by its curious laxity of morals. It drew its line of honour, as do most villages, by the once-set standard of its seigneury. Two generations ago, both the Duke of Northwyk and Lord Trimingham had been noted Corinthians; their descendants suffered strange things on their account. Small use was it for the nineteenth-century Lord Trimingham to lead a life of singular and Evangelical piety: the spirit of his forefathers was stronger than himself, their example much more potent. His teeth were

set on edge continually by the sour grapes they had digested. Village affection was given to Lord Bacton, a true chip of the old block, who needed only the wig and the physique of his ancestors to ruffle it as gaily as they had done. As for the Duke, the less the village saw of him perhaps the better.

Mrs. Stone implored temperance, soberness, and chastity; and, in memory of the grand old Puritans, spoke of examples shown by noble men. The village winked, knowing its nobility, and thinking none the less of them on that account.

Mrs. Stone did not implore, she commanded, and, with the help of Lady Rebecca Hythe, only daughter of Lord Trimingham, held her own among the villagers. Clothing-club days were days of triumph to her. She maintained sumptuary laws, and yearned to stand at the lyk-gate to slice off offending finery. Lady Rebecca opposed ribbons; Mrs. Stone forbade an artificial flower in the club. Hearts ached for the gew-gaws denied them; they asked bread in the shape of pink roses, but to carry off a stone disguised as woollen stockings. Their craving for beauty, their wish to rise on their poor dead artificialities to higher things was sternly checked. The struggle for beauty, the instinct of the soul to adorn the body, seemed waste if not wantonness. Mrs. Stone thanked Heaven piously that she and Lady Rebecca saw eye to eye in these matters.

"I cannot make out how they think of the things they do," she said more than once, and frowned on a flowered delaine passing under her window in the shapelessness of a home-made blouse. "Generally they copy their superiors, and I can't accuse myself of vain adornments." She looked down with modest approval at her plain, brown dress, and remembered Lady Rebecca had

one of just the same shade, and much the same in cut.

Nor could she accuse Dr. Roger Drury of over-dressing his child to the scandal of the neighbourhood: she was merely indecent in her lack of petticoats. No one would copy her for obvious reasons. From the doctor her thoughts were led to Dominick, and thence to his sister. Mrs. Stone frowned, and glanced out of the window.

Mary Blake was passing on her way to the village shop. She seemed to know that unfriendly eyes watched her from ambush, for Mrs. Stone saw her look right and left before she went proudly on with that audacious walk of hers—not flaunting, not demanding attention, but so distinctively certain of its ways.

She wore a dark blue dress, with which even Mrs. Stone could find no fault, save that, perhaps, it fitted too well; but a scarlet ribbon round her waist, a scarlet tie knotted on her bosom, and a scarlet tam-o'-shanter on her crisp, dark head were the sin spots that condemned her.

Every man's head turned as she passed the smithy—an additional offence. She seemed like a queen on her royal progress, not a country girl in search of bacon and matches. Mrs. Stone saw, at last, the worm preying on the moral vitals of the neighbourhood. Youth and the pride of youth, beauty and the pride of that beauty, confronted her in all its arrogance. There are some women who grudge each other these gifts so strongly that their minds turn to branding-irons. The gift of the gods is the gift of the devil, in their eyes.

But all Mrs. Stone said to herself was: "It's almost a pity that girl is so good-looking," unaware of the stirring in the depths, where unsuspected thoughts had root. She knew not the

latent cruelty in herself, in the inner eternal self, which saw dimly the precipice on which such a girl must stand: the hidden self which prayed to its gods or devils for her shame.

She sewed with diligence the new sheet she was making, but she put more than stitches in her work. She was weaving a web in the corners of her mind—weaving patiently. Thought of Mary's beauty led to recollections of that girl's conceit, a demand for that beauty's recognition which increased daily. But Mary's demand was that of some goddess, not touting for worshippers, but ready to reward the faithful.

"I suppose she has got a young man," said Mrs. Stone in the vernacular, accounting, by primitive instinct, for the girl's blossoming. Then idly turned her thoughts to possible men around, then of set purpose numbered them in her mind.

Possibly young Drage, the vet., from Brackney: yes, she had noticed him in the village rather often of late. Possibly the curate, in charge of the mission church for marsh-men—that floating tabernacle, a real Ark of the Covenant; but she hoped not. Relationship with the Church would make Mary unbearable—besides, she was unfit. Then—for the girl was absurdly set above her position—there remained only that heathen philosopher and man of letters, Dr. Drury. Mrs. Stone's busy fingers stopped: she grasped a clue instead of her needle—a clue to many things. The notion explained inexplicable matters: his absurd attentions to the boy, his solicitude for his well-being, the chivalrous attitude which took no advantage where so many might be claimed. "Now I see why he didn't press for those repairs!" Mrs. Stone thought triumphantly, secure in an explanation which had long eluded her.

She folded her work and put it away, took her brown mushroom hat from its peg in the hall, and walked out into the sunlit garden. The vicar knelt on a square of carpet in the middle of the lawn, industriously occupied with a daisy-fork. He lifted a pink face at his wife's approach. "Anything wrong?" he asked apprehensively, unused to her company in the mid-morning.

"No; why should there be?" his wife retorted sharply. "I've finished my sewing, and the day seemed so beautiful I thought I would come out; I'm sure I need fresh air as much as other people."

The vicar sat on his carpet and cleaned his fork with a bit of wood. "Quite right," he said amiably, as he scraped off the earth with a bit of stick and thoughtfully patted it into the small hole in the turf. "I've done a huge patch, Isabella, and, really, there were more daisies than grass."

The discoloured lawn showed extensive excavations. Mrs. Stone set a large foot on one uneven place, ironing it down, as it were, to a level with the rest. "It's been an eyesore all the summer," she observed.

"I know, my dear," said her husband humbly. "I hoped to have attended to it before now, but what with the bees and the chickens—by the way, Williams said the last weren't fat enough—and putting out the bedding-plants, my hands have been rather full."

"You should make Job do his share."

The vicar tilted back his shapeless hat. "Job says it's about all he can do to look after the cows and the pony and the incubator," he said, with a little sigh.

"And I'm sure I'm too busy to help you," replied his wife. "I wish I could. I should know better than to set Langshans as he did! And that reminds

me: your coat is come unsewn under the arm. You must let me have it."

"Thank you, my dear; I thought I felt it give the other day." The vicar pulled himself tenderly out his of coat, and began to empty the pockets. Mrs. Stone held out her hand.

"What a collection, John! You're as bad as a schoolboy, still."

"Nay, my dear; I assure you they are real carnelians. I'm going to polish them when I have time. And this is a really fine specimen of a ribbon agate," he held the stone between himself and the sun, while his wife drew a work-case from her pocket and stitched at the sleeve determinedly.

"I found it on the beach towards Brackney yesterday," he added, and gave the stone an affectionate rub with his handkerchief. "By the way, Mr. Murray's picture of the dunes promises very well."

"Is Mr. Murray still in the neighbourhood? It's so long since we heard anything of him. I wish, John, that you would throw away all that rubbish. Look at the state your pocket is in!"

The vicar spread a protective hand over his property. "It's only clean sand and salt water," he pleaded humbly; "and I assure you these carnelians, polished into beads, will make a very pretty bracelet for you—red and white alternately. Mr. Murray tells me he came across enormous quantities at the other end of the beach, opposite the light-ship. He said he had never seen so many in one place, nor such fine ones. I must look next time I go down to the shore."

"I daresay he picked up all the best," said Mrs. Stone, a little mollified when she heard of the bracelet.

"Nay; one man can scarcely empty the store-

house of the sea." He waited a minute after his speech, then furtively turned over the contents of his pocket, and wrote a few lines in his note-book.

"Poetry again," said Mrs. Stone, with a little sniff.

He did not look poetical as he sat there on his carpet in his patched grey flannel shirt and well-worn black trousers, his brown socks and brown canvas shoes stretched beyond the little rug, and wrinkled up inquiringly at the sky. His forehead grew moist and pink at his wife's comment. "Murray calls his picture by that name—and a few ideas came to me on the subject. I thought of offering them to him eventually—he might like to use them in the Academy catalogue," he said.

"Oh, is the picture going to the Academy?"

"I believe so, or the New Gallery."

"Oh! the New Gallery; I don't think much of that! They hang those Impressionist pictures there, don't they?"

The vicar coughed deprecatingly. "Murray does not speak altogether slightingly of the Impressionist school," he said. "Of course, they are revolutionists—the revulsion from classicism, he called it. And so, of course, we must not look in them for definite adherence to tradition. They do not profess to tell a story; their aim seems to be to produce the emotion of a scene, instead of the scene itself; and, of course, each man is impressed by it in his own way."

"Mr. Murray is an Impressionist himself, I suppose? It sounds to me uncommonly like scamping your work. Did you see the picture?"

"Oh, yes; I saw it. It was something like the general character of our shore. Of course, one could not tell which part, as one sand-hill is so very like another."

"A most inartistic subject," said Mrs. Stone.

"Well, I would not say so altogether, if properly treated. But he made the shadows blue. Have you ever seen blue shadows, Isabella?"

"Never; nor has any one who isn't colour-blind."

"I pointed it out to him, but I didn't see him alter it. Also, I think it would be improved by the introduction of a few figures, but he seems to think not."

"I should imagine it's because he can't paint them."

"No doubt you are right, dear," said the vicar submissively; "but he said it was the solitude which attracted him. A strange man—a very strange man," he added thoughtfully.

"Very strange; most uncivil never to have come here after our invitations, too."

"He seemed grateful for the attention, dear; but he may be unused to society."

"I told him I was asking dear Lady Rebecca——"

"Perhaps he would have come if we had been alone. I don't expect he is used to the aristocracy."

"Lady Rebecca wanted to see him. She was quite vexed——"

"He may not have a dress suit." The vicar dug up another daisy as he spoke, and held it impaled on his fork.

"It's much more probable he has made friends with young Drage, or some other young man of that class," said his wife.

"He is old as a companion for young Drage."

Mrs. Stone tossed the coat sleeve aside. "Bachelors always fancy themselves young," she said, with a matron's contempt for that undisciplined tribe. "There, John, I think that's all right now."

"Thank you, my love. How quick you have

been!" He stretched out his hand for the coat, which she hung on his arm. "Poor Murray; times like these make one pity bachelors."

"There's nothing to prevent his marriage that I know of. He is a *landscape* painter," said Mrs. Stone.

The vicar heard the emphasis, and nodded; pulled his ugly, good-natured mouth into more virtuous lines, and sighed the sigh of the godly over the interesting ungodliness of many others. "I honoured his refusal to put figures in the picture of the sand-hills, even though he must have known it would improve it," he said firmly.

"Ah! the heart knows its own weakness," said Mrs. Stone, with austere commendation.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, Murray's picture of Mary grew daily: a gorgeous picture, definitely splendid in pose and colouring. Also definitely tempting.

CHAPTER VII.

HONOR and Dominick sat side by side on the staithe. Behind them rose the fir plantation, umber-blue in its foliage, grey and crimson as to its tree-trunks under the setting sun. Before them sparkled the dancing waters of the Broad, bright as if golden wires from the sunset were laid along the violet waves, vanishing in the far distance in a haze of golden light.

In the narrow reed-walled creek rocked a little boat, whose halliards rattled in the light evening breeze. Beside the children lay a big bundle, wrapped up in an old table-cloth, on which Dominick kept a possessive foot. Honor read from a written list:

"Two blankets."

Dominick lifted a finger. "I got those from my bed, that's all right."

Honor read on: "A tarpaulin; I managed that."

Dominick held up another finger. "Matches, a candle, soap, two tooth-brushes," Honor read on rapidly, till the fingers of each hand accounted for each item.

"We ought to have some green stuff. People get scurvy if they don't have fresh vegetables," said Dominick, as she finished the list.

"There's water-cress," said Honor, "won't that do? And I took some lemons, you know."

"Then, come along," and Dominick shouldered his bundle. He steadied the little boat with his foot while Honor clambered in, then ran up the sail, and cast off. The boat headed for the island. There was enough wind to fill the little sail, and to blow Honor's hair about her ears. They sailed in wide tacks across the mere, lengthening their voyage as much as possible, cutting the gold and violet of the waves, and leaving a golden furrow in their wake.

The boat moved like a living thing under their active hands; Dominick stood up square in the stern. In imagination he sailed other waters than those of Norton mere—a stranger sea. The hazy reed-beds were no reed-beds, but pictures drawn on limitless wastes to lure such bold mariners to their doom. The Spanish Main, with its sunken treasure ships, golden galleons—he loved the romance of the word—old high-pooped caravels—he saw them under the still waters, where the long weeds waved sleepily.

For the moment his mind was full of romance: to him the world of waters was alive with the possibilities of his imagination; he was a pioneer creating a new earth out of chaos. The boat seemed sailing into the heart of the sun.

The island was small, one of those floating ronds which drift about with the tide before fixing themselves; a thing of ooze, rotted sedge, and tangled grass, bound together with mud, and rooted at last in the water-way at the far side of the mere. On either side rose up the wall of reeds, and beyond lay mile after mile of level marsh.

They pegged out the tarpaulin on the sodden ground, slung the table-cloth, tentwise, over two convenient thorn bushes, and folded up the blankets. Then Honor spread the table.

"We must husband our victuals," said Dominick, as he surveyed the feast.

"I'm not very hungry, I ate such a big tea on purpose," Honor confessed. "By the way," she added, "I wonder why people say 'husband' anything. I thought the wife looked after the housekeeping?"

Dominick drew an ancient breech-loading pistol from his pocket, conscientiously cocked and uncocked it, and sighted along the clumsy barrel. "I suppose they mean 'take care of'—it's a husband's duty, isn't it?" he asked, and put the pistol back in his pocket.

"I wonder, do men take more care of things than women do?" said Honor, thoughtfully, with her chin on her hands.

"It depends on the things," answered Dominick with wisdom.

"What would you take care of, Dominick?"

Dominick looked down at her earnest face. "I don't know yet," he said, uncertainly. "Of course, a wife, if I had one, and children, and this old place." He measured the huge expanse before him with eyes that were full of dreams. "But there's something more, isn't there? Do you ever feel as if you were hunting for something you couldn't find—something that is you yourself, and yet is only part of everything all round you? It makes you feel suddenly wide inside when you feel it, and quite shut in when it goes."

"I know." To Honor the feeling came in the outgiving of herself to her world. Dominick was of a more receptive nature. He claimed tribute from his surroundings. Honor gave, while he took.

"Perhaps one will have the feeling always when we're grown up," she added. "I think father would have it."

"I don't think he has it *because* he's grown up," returned Dominick, from his wider experience of men and their manners. "Because, in some ways, I think we are as old as we will ever be, don't you?"

"Oh yes, I understand; you mean it's inside one, isn't it?"

"One's inside is so queer," said Dominick, reminiscently. "Do you ever wonder what you're like inside, Honor?—I don't mean bones, and muscles, and things like that, you know."

"I know—soul," said Honor.

"Yes. Well, are you sure you have a soul?"

"I couldn't think without one, could I?"

"That's your mind, stupid."

"Not in the way I mean. It wouldn't be the 'I' who thinks, if I wasn't myself. Yes, I'm sure I have a soul. Aren't you?"

"Suppose you think only because you reflect other people's thoughts—hadn't any of your own?" Dominick's face looked rather grey in the evening light.

"There must be something to catch the reflection," said Honor, with some sense.

Dominick moved restlessly, digging his heels into the ground as though he wanted foothold. "It makes one wish one were dead, so that one might know," he said breathlessly.

"Perhaps we haven't done anything yet to deserve to die," said Honor.

"Deserve? What do you mean?"

"I suppose one knows before one does die," Honor answered composedly. "Very likely we don't find out till then."

"But then, suppose—do you remember, Honor, when Odysseus called to the dead, how they were all shades—grey, floating shades. It's beastly."

"They were shades to Odysseus, but he was living. We don't know if they were shades to each other—their fellow-dead," said Honor, slowly. "And Odysseus recognised them, and they spoke to him."

"After they had drunk blood—ugh."

"They weren't in their natural condition," answered Honor, "that's why they drank blood, perhaps."

"Perhaps, perhaps," said Dominick, scornfully; "the whole business seems made of perhapses."

"But do you remember what Odysseus said?" Honor asked after a pause, "when Teiresias told him what would happen to him. 'All these things the gods have ordered after their own will.' Do you think it matters, when they have ordered it, Dominick?"

"I should like some choice about things."

"Perhaps we have a choice about the time between birth and death—they must be fixed, I suppose; but there's a long time in between."

"Oh, if you're content——" Dominick shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know if it's content. It's because it must be," said Honor with philosophy.

"It's giving in"—there was a world of rebellion in Dominick's voice.

"I wonder," said Honor dreamily.

"I don't. Oh, why doesn't something explain!" he cried, and stretched his arms to the changeful waters of the Broad. The gold and green and violet were fading to an indefinite, chilly grey. An immense loneliness brooded over the watery waste; birds settled to their roost in the sedges; no life stirred; there was nothing visible beyond the water, the grey rushes, and the mist-hung marsh.

Slowly the night closed in; the thick mists rose up, like ghosts of the dead day, filling all the spaces beyond the water line. Slowly, too, the night drew on her wild imagination and peopled the spaces. Islands rose where never an island showed by daylight, and the mist rolled round their bases like some phantom river winding to the no less phantom sky. Far away, where daytime showed the poplar's stately silver, there hung the curtain of the mist. Only the shiver of the rustling leaves drifted across the silent water; only the gentle splash and ripple of the waves lapping against the reed-stems. Night had shut the door on sound; silence reigned. Honor and Dominick drew a little nearer together in community of awe. Something within her heart beat in solemn time to the atmosphere of the place; within herself the hands of her soul were clasped on the knees of the gods. She prayed wordlessly. Then slid her hand into Dominick's.

"You can hear the night thinking," she said.

"I don't know that I want it to think," answered Dominick.

The same intangible feeling of dread that made him throw stones to break the silence worked in him now. He felt that the night was speaking, that she had a secret message in the bosom of her silences; but he wanted to storm that secret, and tear it forth, not wait for the revelation to be granted him.

Darker grew the grey of the waters, more dense the whiteness of the mist. Angels folded their wings round Honor; phantoms haunted Dominick. The night wind sighed as it touched the rushes; in their silken rustle was the prophecy of autumn—autumn, who, even now, laid her russet fingers on the trees.

Dominick beat off the assailing fear, plunging his eyes into the growing darkness of the night as though to satisfy his dread. Honor waited, while the night music filled her soul.

"We'd better have supper," said Dominick abruptly.

Honor shivered; the words lifted from her a sense of drowsiness. She hardly knew where she had been; she knew only that she had listened to something sad and sweet.

Dominick struck a match carefully and lighted a candle. Honor held it while he built a mud-cone for a candle-stick. The light wavered and flickered uncertainly in the shadow of the tent, as the draught caught the flame and blew it about.

"It's burning blue," said Dominick, watchfully, and laid his pistol by his side. Somehow thoughts of pirates and golden galleons were not in keeping with the night-world, unless it were the wraiths of drowned men and phantoms of their sunken ships.

"Burns blue? Does that mean there are ghosts about?" asked Honor.

"Hush!" said Dominick uneasily, his head turned over his shoulder, looking out into the darkness, while his hands played with the trigger of his pistol, and his thoughts ran to a sixpence, sacrificed to make a sacred bullet.

"I expect it is my mother," said Honor, after a little pause. Dominick's hands came back to his chicken bone. There was something uncanny about Honor, in her fearlessness of hidden things, and in the open way she spoke of them.

"You couldn't mind—my mother," she said.

"What do you mean by 'mind'?" Dominick's spirit was up in arms.

Honor faced him across the tell-tale light. "I

mean, you could not think her inquisitive, or prying, as perhaps you might an ordinary ghost."

"Oh no, I don't mind her being here at all."

"I should like her to know that," said Honor, wistfully.

"I'll tell her so if you like." Dominick faced the pretty fancy. "Honor's mother, I'm glad you're here," he said aloud, "and I like you to know she is happy, and that I'm taking care of her."

"Thank you, Dominick," said Honor fervently.

There was silence for a while, during which the candle-flame straightened to its spear of yellow light. Dominick uncorked the cider bottle. He filled a horn tumbler—a relic of Peter Blake. Honor and he drank in turn.

"I rather like that dodge of libation," he said at last.

Honor's mind ran to the "Last Days of Pompeii," and regretted she could not provide a statue of Bacchus. "We can't ask him to be propitious as Glaucus did," she said.

For answer Dominick filled his cup to the brim. As old a ritual was his. "To the night, and the dwellers of the night," he said, and dipped his fingers in and flung the drops abroad. "To the waters, and them that move in the waters," and he threw the rest into the leaden mere. "There, Honor, we're safe now, aren't we? if they thought of harming us."

Honor did not remind him that libations took place at the beginning of the feast. She was much more occupied in wondering what he saw in the night that could dream of harming them.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, Mary Blake came home from the Vicarage to an empty house. Dominick's bed

was stripped; his window hung wide open to the damp night air. For the moment Mary blamed her own selfish absorption in her own concerns; then she laughed aloud, an angry little laugh. "Up at the Farm again, never thinking of my worries," she said; shut the window, straightened the bed-clothes mechanically, and went downstairs again.

The tall clock in the kitchen said half-past ten. Mary's walk from the glee class seemed to take longer each week; but then, they were lonely walks no longer. She put on her hat again, and went out through the garden towards the Farm.

There were lights about the house, and the hall door stood wide open, flooding the worn steps with a broad yellow glow. Dr. Drury stood in the hall, wrapped in an ulster. He scowled on Mary as she came up the steps. "Is my brother with you?" she demanded, frowning in her turn.

Dr. Drury fastened the collar of his ulster. "As far as I know, your brother has eloped with my daughter, and they may be anywhere between Norton and Yarmouth," he answered drily.

Mary's face lost some colour. "They'll catch their deaths of cold a night like this," she said. She was still outside the threshold.

"I expect they've provisioned themselves," said the doctor philosophically; "they've stolen a boat and gone—where, it will be my pleasing duty to discover."

"Dominick should have known better," cried Mary angrily.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and came out on the steps. "I'm going to try the mere," he said; "the mist is lifting, and we may be able to find our away across. It's possible they're camping out on the island."

"But what will you do with them?" Mary asked anxiously. There was something uncompromising about the grim doctor in the moonlight.

He turned to her with a smile. "I'm not going to assault Dominick, if that's what you're afraid of," he said. "It's only a child's trick, not vice. I'm much more concerned about the damp than about conventions."

Mary kept step with him down the garden. He carried a lantern, and now and again threw the light on her path. They walked in a silence alive with hostility. The night was intensely still; the mist clearing, and hardening to a first September frost. Overhead, the moon broke through a bank of cloud, and laid a long, silver pathway across the mere.

Dr. Drury hauled a punt out of the boat-house, and quanted her to the staithe. Mary took her place without a word. They headed for the island in stern silence. Mary was oppressed with a feeling of awe—out on the waste of waters alone with the strange doctor, with nothing but the solemn moon to guard her from his menaces!

"Why weren't you looking after your brother?" asked the doctor suddenly.

Mary held her head higher. "I was at the glee class. Why weren't you looking after your daughter?" she retorted.

She saw his face relax into a grim smile. "A fair counter; I bury the hatchet," he said.

They neared the rond, meaning to search it before beating round the mere. It lay in peace under the moonlight, with the lazy water lapping at the sedge. On the shadow-side rocked a little open boat; higher up hung a tent between the thorns. There was no sound.

"Will you go ashore, or shall I?" the doctor

asked. Something appealed to him in that innocent security—a pathos that was lost on Mary. She was tired, angry, and rather frightened.

"Oh, you go," she answered hastily.

The doctor crashed among the reeds, and landed.

"Oh, Dominick!" cried Honor, waking at the sound, "is it savages, do you think, or only ghosts?"

When Dr. Drury held the lantern under the tent-flap, he saw Honor curled in her blanket; but Dominick was on his feet guarding her with levelled pistol. This time it was loaded with a silver bullet.

"Don't shoot; I come in peace," said Dr. Drury.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOLEMN promises were extracted from the children with regard to future adventures. Dominick was strangely depressed at the thwarting of his plan; excitably depressed in a way no one could combat. It seemed to him that failure dogged his steps. A heavy, feverish cold impressed the thought more firmly on him. Superstition woke. Always the sea stood in his way, he told himself rebelliously; any great expanse of water standing as a symbol of his enemy. Always it mocked him, beckoning, caressing, and betraying. As he lay in bed he felt its force more definitely. The sea was less terrible when he could face it in the daylight than when he heard it calling through the blind night-hours. When he put his head under the bed-clothes it seemed as though he were in some cavern, fathoms beneath the waves, with the sound in his ears as though the memory of all the deeps were whispered to him through the lips of shells. The fancy pursued him; he was unable to keep himself from listening. There was deadly fear; but there was also fascination.

It sounded like the hollow voice of some sea-dweller, a voice which carried in its breath the tears of all the winds and waters, the voice of the soulless foam. He heard the ripple of the waves on the shore, the whisper of the sea; he heard

the cry of its passion as it threw its arms against the sand-hills, seeking the establishment of its borders, crying, may-hap, for a soul. Anon he heard the rage of its despair, defying earth and heaven, lusting for slaughter, because it knew its eternal doom.

In the doom of the sea Dominick seemed to read his own. In the night watches he sought his soul, consciously, and found it sea-drift. He crammed the sheet into his mouth to stop himself from screaming. The empty nothingness, the spirit of the sea, came over him in flood. Was he not a child of the sea; through his birth had he not inherited its soulless misery? He beat his hand on the pillow, crying through the darkness, even as the sea may cry. But the god to whom he cried was sleeping; there came no answer to his soul.

He woke from that night's fever sensibly older. The night had marked him for her own, the sea had touched his lips with bitter waters. Dominick saw uncharted depths—where the wrecks lie.

Honor came off scot free. No cold troubled her health, no agitations beset her mind. Blind fear laid no cold hand on Honor; perhaps, because she rarely thought about herself at all. Fear feeds on egoism.

"It's so unfair," said Dominick passionately, his face convulsed in the upheaval of his mind. He and Honor were waiting their lesson in the hall at the Farm. Dominick leaned forward, and pulled a rose from the bowl, stripping the petals violently. Honor's eyes reproached him; she had an old fancy that flowers were sentient creatures.

"It's all very well," he said, noticing her look; "but I like to hurt it. I hope it *can* feel."

Honor opened her book. "You're unfair, too," she said.

"Well, what if I am? Who was unfair first? Why was I ill after that rotten island business? I didn't do any more harm than you. If it was wrong to go, why was only one of us ill? I don't believe you were even scolded."

"No, I wasn't—and you weren't, either, were you? You were ill because you caught cold, nothing else."

"But why was I ill? It's not even as if I got cold instead of you; I could understand the sense of that!" Dominick's blue eyes enlarged and darkened with imaginations of self-sacrifice, with picturesque accessories. Then he dug his pen viciously into the scattered petals on the table. "It wasn't the illness I minded," he said slowly, "it was the thinking—are you laughing?—you've no idea how one can think, or you wouldn't. I tell you it was hell; just hell. I hate everything," he ended incoherently, and stabbed the table again.

Honor came down from her chair, and walked quietly round the other side. Dominick's black head was bent over his books; she put her arm round the sulky shoulders. "I don't want you to hate me," she said. It was the first time self had been in her thoughts, and its presence was partly due to an instinct which told her it was good for Dominick that it should be there. She kissed the back of his head. "I wish I could take the unfairness and have had the cold," she said.

She had never kissed him before, but the impulse stirred in her beyond herself. To his surprise, Dominick felt his eyes grow wet, and the hard knot in his throat relax a little. For the moment, the emotional side of the Celt was uppermost.

"I don't hate you; I couldn't," he answered

hurriedly. Honor's medicine had done its work. He watched her curiously.

"What made you think of doing that?" he asked at last.

"Think of what?"

It was Dominick who blushed. "Why—kissing," he whispered, as he turned the petals over with his pen.

Honor's clear eyes grew a little introspective; she considered the matter in its many bearings. "I don't know," she said honestly, "unless because I thought you wanted it."

"Not because you wanted to?"

"No; I think I was thinking most of you," said Honor slowly.

After lessons, they made their way once more to the Broad. "I like that tale of Hero and Leander," said Dominick; their morning's studies had led them to that tragedy.

Honor shuffled her feet among the fallen leaves. The light wind danced in her hair, with the sting of autumn in its mocking touch. "So do I, only I think I should have liked Hero better if she had swum a little way to meet him," she answered.

"I expect she was very beautiful," said Dominick, seeking the cause of such devotion.

"Of course," Honor agreed generously. "I think she was something like your sister, don't you? Very grand and tall, and walking like a queen."

Dominick kicked the leaves thoughtfully. "No; I think, somehow, she was more like the sea—that her hair went in long, uncertain waves, and that she had sea-eyes, so that no one knew their colour. Why is it, Honor, that one feels the beauty of something one can't describe so much more

than the beauty that one can? Like the sea, you know—you might talk about her for hours, and not be any nearer describing what she really is, or what she says. Would you?"

"Perhaps it says different things to different people," said Honor slowly.

"Perhaps. What does she say to you?"

Honor thought for a while. "I can't quite say. It doesn't sound happy or good, and I always feel sorry when I listen," she replied.

"She makes me want to fight," said Dominick. "It feels just as if she had got a secret—my secret—and that she meant to keep it from me. I know father was listening and when she whispered to him he died. I want to hear and live."

"Perhaps Leander listened, and so got drowned," said Honor.

"But he had Hero's light."

"Perhaps he didn't always look at it," said Honor.

Dominick considered the matter. In the hidden places of his mind his spirit was reading a parable: that spirit which, in every one of us, probes for the heavenly meaning in the meanest earthly story; the spirit which sees beyond the limit of the words. His occult researches were not comforting, though the ordinary, everyday, working mind of the boy was scarcely conscious of the prophecy. A shadowy warning rose from the deeps of that eternal, barely conscious self, flashed for a moment on the surface of his mind, and dived again. He was conscious only of a momentary troubling of the waters, a sense that something touched the level of his understanding too intangible for him to grasp.

"I wonder if, as well as loving Hero, he was defying the sea," he said, and pictured the divided allegiance.

"I wonder—perhaps he was like you, Dominick, and hated it."

"But she sha'n't conquer me!" Dominick's challenge rang up to the Lords of Life. He squared his shoulders, and flung back his head, as if he watched them on their throne in the skies. Honor admired him wistfully for his daring and his pride. She did not covet it for herself; she was hoping all things for him, but in some inscrutable way the hope was dulled by fear.

Dominick sought about for some deed of prowess. Sense of failure had fallen from him; for the time he was stronger than the gods. He burned to rehabilitate himself in Honor's eyes, to prove to the Immortals he was immortal, too.

"I'm going to swim the mere!" he said. Indefinitely, his mind held out a challenge to his enemy, the sea; indefinitely, too, Leander's heroism played its part in his ambitions. Honor admired him more than ever.

"All the way across?" she asked.

"All the way," Dominick answered proudly.

He went into the upper room of the boat-house, where he stripped, piling his clothes on a corner of the beach. Below, Honor was dragging out a rowing-boat; he could hear through the plank flooring the splash of water against the piles of the boat-house.

"I ought to oil myself all over," he thought, as he tightened the string of his swimming-drawers and went through a few exercises to warm himself, for the situation was chilly. Then he ran down to the staithe below. Honor sat in her boat, with her oars in the rowlocks. "I'm going to row across, so that I may watch your swimming," she said.

"Keep out of my way, then; I don't want you

to foul me," answered Dominick. He took a running plunge and dived into the mere.

Honor watched his head rise at some distance, as sleek and black as the moor-fowl swimming near. She backed the boat steadily in his wake. The brisk September wind ruffled the grey waters in little dancing ripples; a light haze lay over the farther banks, where the brown and grey and purple of the rushes rose in a dusky wall. The silver of the autumn sunlight lay in the track; Dominick seemed swimming through its cold sheen to a mysterious future, where the sedge-plumes beckoned him. He swam in the luxury of the pride which feels its strength. With each long breast-stroke that drove him nearer his goal he felt that he asserted his power, rejoicing that it was his, and challenging the great waste of waters to conquer him.

He swam a third of the way before he felt the force of the wind. It swept over the marshes, across the bending reeds, stinging the water to a sudden tingling chill. Till now he had felt pleasantly warm; the change shrank his strength. Yet he swam on, with more noticeable effort. He turned on his side. Honor could see the sweep of his arm as he drove himself further through the water. He was not physically tired, he was cold, and the cold laid chilling hands on his spirit as well as on his limbs. Presently he floated, with the water rippling over his breast.

Honor felt the first pang of doubt in her heart. Only half-way across, and he was failing; she knew he was failing. But she was less concerned for the failure than for his knowledge of it. Her boat was close to him. She could see how the cold affected the colour of his skin, painting green shadows on the warm, brown flesh. He swam

wearily; perhaps the doubt was on him, too. She rested on her oars.

"You're nearly there," she cried; "you're swimming splendidly!" Her tone of encouragement seemed to give Dominick fresh strength; for the next few yards he swam in all his old style, strength came back to his limbs with the hope of his heart. Honor triumphed as she watched him.

The first sedges found foothold, pioneers of an advancing host, before Dominick's strength flagged. He stood up, thinking to touch ground. Before he reached the surface again, Honor drove her boat against the reeds. The cry was in her heart, not on her lips.

He caught at the boat-edge as he rose, his face full of fear beyond the fear for life. Honor watched the heaving breast, the tension of the muscles as he clung to the side. She leaned down to him. "Don't give in, Dominick," she pleaded. There was something beyond the mere test of endurance; to her, the matter became a prophecy as well.

"You want me to drown!" cried Dominick, his drawn face twitching.

"I want you to win!" said Honor, with her face on fire. She felt brutal as she watched him loosen his grasp, felt he would misunderstand her, even felt as though she taunted him. But her heart lifted itself above all other thoughts when she saw him touch land, catch at the flowering rushes, and draw himself ashore. He seemed frightfully exhausted, less from bodily weakness than from spent emotions. He lay on the weeds, unable to stir; his feet dangled limp and helpless in the water. At last, he looked up languidly, then shivered with the violence of returning life.

But it was not till he was warm and clothed

again, that Dominick's right mind returned to him. Just before going home, he came close to Honor, and spoke. "It was through you that I got across all right," he said, and his voice was curiously calm. "If you hadn't been so sure for me, I couldn't have done it!"

Honor found no answer ready to her lips.

CHAPTER IX.

MURRAY'S picture of the sand-hills drew nearer its completion; his picture of Mary, too, was nearly done. Yet he risked the beauty of both through sheer hatred of finality; it seemed absurdly impossible to pack his traps and move away. Norton laid a spell upon him which held his feet.

Indefinitely, as he suggested the beauties of those waste sands and high dunes, had he played on Mary's heart and mind with vague intent. There was no aforethought malice, only a keen appreciation of the gifts of the gods, and a thankful acceptance of their bounty. Mary pleased his eyes, reassured him of his youth through the edge of his feeling, and certainly made a fine picture. These causes won his gratitude.

He showed it in the usual way. He talked to her of his own lonely, roving life, the wonders he had seen when his youth took him far afield, the way in which he had made himself; talked well with the indifference that at once galled and charmed her; talked as a man who has seen everything worth seeing, and who has done rather more things than were worth the expended energy. "I think," he said, still indifferently, "that, bar the Sphinx and a red-haired Venetian I knew, you are the thing best worth seeing of them all."

And he set her heart on fire with a mad ambition —personal ambition, not for the glory of the house of Blake, but for the nearer, dearer glory of herself. Throughout his painting she sat, apparently careless of the comments that fell from his unconscious lips, the quick curse when his inept brush flagged, or the colours dimmed before her carnations; the impersonal ejaculatory compliments he paid her by his neglect of herself in absorption in her beauty. He spoke in all good faith, no villain, no hero, simply full of his subject; but it was as though his idle words evoked her spirit from Mary's underworld.

The sand-dunes lay in full sun, the wind blew off the land, the nest where Mary lay was secure and warm. The violet sea lay under the turquoise sky, with the hard, white sands running down to its broken verge, and the stiff spare marram grasses standing up like spears about its borders.

"Nearly done," said Murray, with a sigh, as he put a higher light on the sandy background.

The colour faded a little in Mary's face; there was effort in her answer. "You have been so persevering, you deserve to get it done."

Murray bent over his palette. "After all, this isn't my own—my native land; I'm only a stranger and sojourner. But, great gods! how I shall miss the place!"

"You've made it your own," said Mary slowly.

Something in her tone made Murray feel as if she had drawn nearer to him. He felt rather nervous. It might be but the prelude to emotional display; he was not strong enough for scenes. Yet somewhere within him the enormous selfishness of manhood stretched out its hands to the girl. He hoped she would miss him; miss him in a finely restrained way, just sufficiently to make her con-

trast him with the men of the place—the louts—not enough to break her heart, but enough to supply her with a sentimental interest. He wondered how she would express herself.

Mary knitted to the end of her row, the thin strip of scarlet waving like a streamer over her dress. "I suppose this will be the last sitting," she said; "you won't want me again?"

"What makes you think so?" asked Murray harshly. He saw the quick grace of her movement, as she shrugged her shoulders slightly, and spread her hands abroad. She smiled, but he felt far from smiling. Then she laid down her knitting, and looked at him steadily.

"We've had a good time," he said; then corrected himself deliberately: "I've had a good time, thanks to you, Miss Blake."

Mary said nothing, but her blue eyes said a good deal.

Murray painted in a grass-blade with elaborate care. "I'm sorry it's over," he said, deliberately inviting the scene he dreaded. "I wonder if you will make up your mind to leave Arcadia, to see your portrait in the exhibition?" His eyes met hers. "It's a good bit of work," he added. "Enormously educational place, this village of yours, you know. It's taught me how to handle light in an amazing way."

"You aren't the only one who's learnt," said Mary. Followed a silence which wrapped him in constraint.

"Look here," Mary went on quickly; "since I've sat to you it strikes me I've learnt a good deal. You have told me so much about the larger life that you've made me fairly sick of the one I'm living here. I feel dead, except when I'm angry—I'm generally angry," she added as an afterthought. "But you've taught me something else. Do you

think I haven't learnt that I'm worth painting, worth something just for my body's sake; because I have blue eyes and black hair, and am what I am? You forget you taught me that. You were glad to paint me; other people will be glad to paint me, too. I won't stay here to grow old and withered and soured; I'll go and make my own life somewhere else, that's what you've taught me while you painted me."

Murray's brush stopped. "Do you quite realize what you are saying?" he demanded aghast, yet with something like exultation in his heart. She cared——

"Well enough to act on it," said Mary.

Murray caught at straws. "But Dominick?"

"Dominick's settled, and done for; who is he to interfere?" That straw went down the wind.

"People would say——" Murray began, with the weakness of desperation, when Mary stopped him with a laugh.

"People would say!" she echoed scornfully; "and all along you've been teaching me to despise what people say, or think, or leave unsaid! What do I care what they say? I want to go away; what harm is there in that? They're whispering already because you've been to see me once or twice when Dominick was out. Could I turn you away from the door-step? They can shout now, for all I care!"

Murray laid his palette and brushes down on his paint-box; then rose, took her by her two hands, and pulled her to her feet. "Do you mean they are whispering about you and me?" His strong fingers still held her wrists.

"Perhaps."

"You've known it?"

She answered him never a word.

"But, good God! don't you see the blackguard you make me out?"

Mary smiled. "I mean to go away; what harm is there in that?"

"You mean, that you are driven to this idea because of me?" The scene he dreaded seemed perilously near.

"No one drives me but myself," said Mary.

He loosed her wrists; round them were rings of red. "You can't understand," he said below his breath; "you don't know the kind of life you're looking forward to. You don't realise all it means to be a professional model. You seem to think me a bit of a sweep; I'm a Galahad compared with the majority of men. What will you think of their familiarities—familiarities, remember, which you can't resent. A professional model must have no fancies," he felt the thought unthinkable, repugnant. Yet, after all, the modesty of a girl must be measured by the standard she herself sets up. "Do you suppose all models are like yourself; do you wish to associate yourself with them?" His conscience kicked him to the speech.

"I shall only do what they are doing—sell what you have called my beauty."

"Sell your beauty, sell your modesty!" Speech grew plainer with his growing need. Jealousy flamed up. He had found her; she was his by right of treasure trove, no other man should lay finger on her beauty. The one feeling that possessed him was an overmastering desire to keep her for himself.

"At any rate, I should be seen!" said Mary, with the blue light in her eyes. The elemental force was embodied, indeed. Murray's eyes lighted responsively against his will.

"It will be everything if you will recommend me to some really celebrated painters," she added. "I haven't made a bad model, have I? and you surely will?"

An insane jealousy took hold of Murray. "No; I won't," he said.

Mary turned to him, wonder and reproach in her wide eyes; but below the reproach lay understanding, even a little thrill of triumph in her power. "I looked to you to help me," she said with heaving breast. It was his chance, and he took it.

"If I won't, it's because I want you all to myself," he said. "If you want to get away from your life here, there's an easier way than the one you think of. Come with me instead."

There was silence. A whirl of sand blew smoke-like from the dunes. Mary's principles were as vagrant. She looked at Murray half in fear—the larger half in gratitude.

"We could see something of the world together," Murray added. "I'm going abroad directly."

"You'd get tired of me," said Mary, woman-shrewd to know that possession and satiety are often interchangeable terms.

"Or you of me. Will you risk it?"

"But I'm not sure that I love you in the least," said Mary, and for the first time the red flamed in her face.

"I'll risk that. Besides, I love you enough for two."

Mary shook her head, then turned and looked over the sea, as it wearily lipped the shore; the strength of its heart seemed spent in despair of breaking its boundaries. She caught her breath.

"Can't you trust me, Mary? Do you believe I should have stayed here as I have done but for

you?" His voice slid into the current of her mind, swaying her thoughts. "Oh, my dear, my dear, life isn't long enough for our happiness. Don't waste time in heart-searchings; let us thank the gods for such days as this, and leave the rest."

"I'm not afraid. I'm only wanting to be fair," said Mary.

"I find you fair enough." He was close to her now, close enough to read the struggle in her eyes. "You have let me come into your life a little way. Don't shut the door."

"Oh, you can open it," said Mary with a broken laugh; "do you mean it really? Do you want me?"

"My God! how I want you!" said Murray.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. STONE was observing some large posters on the shutters of the general shop. The shutters folded back against the wall, and were secured with a chain and pin. They were excellent hoardings in their way, and bill-stickers made full use of them.

The upper part of both shutters was occupied by an enormous poster—black letters on a flaming yellow ground, setting forth the monster and unparalleled attractions of Brackney Fair. The author was as lavish with his admiration marks as the printer with his capitals.

Lower down the unrivalled attractions resolved themselves into detail:—Royal theatrical company from London, with the "Red Barn Murder" and a real ghost; the most wonderful dancer on a tight-rope ever seen by crowned heads; acrobats, jugglers, performing animals from pigs to elephants, swinging boats, galloping horses. Admission free. Frolic, festivity, fun. There were also warm invitations to come early. Mrs. Stone's face grew bitter as she read. She turned her eyes to the window. Among the fly-spotted biscuit tins, the red and yellow cheeses, the gammons of bacon, and tea and sugar canisters, weakly leaning for support on a bladder of lard, was another bill, an unobtrusive one, devoid of fantastic letters, and florid

colouring :—" C.M.S. Meeting to-night in the school-room, 8 o'clock. All friends are earnestly invited to attend."

She looked from one invitation to another and set her teeth. Then she pushed open the door so that the shop-bell jangled its discordant protest, and went into the stuffy little shop, stooping to avoid the string of scrubbing-brushes which swung from the beam. The place was dark and her knees and elbows were in danger in spite of her care. She fell against a bulky obstacle and knew it by its smell for unbleached calico, avoided a companion giant roll only to be entrapped by the one chair in the shop. She knocked on the counter with the handle of her sunshade. A scuffle answered her from the shop-parlour and a gaunt woman came in. She made the semblance of a curtsey behind the counter, distantly acknowledged by Mrs. Stone.

" Good-morning, Mrs. Clarke. I am sorry to see that you have again disregarded the vicar's wishes, and allowed the Fair posters to disfigure your shutters." She laid down her sunshade with deference to the butter on the counter, and mechanically straightened a roll of print that was dangerously near. " I thought this time, at least, we might depend on you, that you promised not to advertise the disgraceful affair." She pointed a brown-gloved forefinger at the pile of shameless handbills.

" Fair time come only once a year," said the woman apologetically; " and I thought as how you and the vicar would be pleased, seeing I put your bill in the front of the window."

" Never pleased so long as those posters call attention to the Fair. I wonder you are not ashamed, when you know what every decent person

thinks of it. Every time the Fair comes it brings sin and suffering in its train. How are we to keep the boys and girls modest and respectable when their elders fling temptation in their way? Once a year will be no excuse on the Day of Judgment; once a year is quite enough for the Devil to reap his harvest." Mrs. Stone's sallow face flushed with earnestness: it was a matter on which she felt deeply.

Mrs. Clarke dusted the square bottles of liquorice and red and white striped peppermint with rather trembling hands. Generations of subservient forbears bred outward submission in her. She held her tongue till she felt she could speak civilly.

"Of course, ma'am, I'm sorry to displease the vicar and yourself in any way," she said. "But I have my customers to think of, and they're used to getting the bills from me. I don't hinder none from going, nor I don't advise any to go. They must choose for themselves, I say; and if it's the one bit of outing they get in the year, you can't hardly blame them, ma'am, for making the most of it."

"You know the vicar's opinion and mine, Mrs. Clarke," said the vicar's wife, the rigidity of her own virtue echoed in her inflexible voice. "I should be sorry to transfer our custom elsewhere, but——"

"As to that, you will, of course, do as best suit you, ma'am," said Mrs. Clarke quietly, and reflected that the Brackney grocer was rather out of range. The Trimingham household, she knew, provisioned itself from the Army and Navy Stores.

The shop-bell stopped further comments. Mrs. Stone picked up her sunshade as Dr. Drury came into the shop. He took off his hat and bowed ceremoniously to both women. It annoyed Mrs.

Stone to feel that respect for her sex, rather than for her position, induced the courtesy.

"If I might trouble you to give me a hand-bill," he said with his aloof air.

Mrs. Clarke eyed him with a lively dread. Even if the presence of Mrs. Stone were some protection, it seemed as though she had evoked the village devil by her hand-bills. Mrs. Stone watched the scene with austere dismay. He took the paper from the woman's outstretched hand. "Infinitely obliged to you, madam. A mighty list of attractions, truly; but one wants the appetite of youth for these adventures." He folded up the paper carefully and put it in his pocket; then turned with a little smile to Mrs. Stone. "We old folks are apt to think only of the bird we eat at Michaelmas, not of the numerous wild geese of our own kind, and their insatiable appetites."

"I don't understand you, Dr. Drury."

"My dear lady, Eve didn't strip the Tree of Knowledge of all its apples, did she? There's a feast to-night of another kind than that which enters on St. Michael's menu—but it's the same old apple sauce."

Mrs. Stone clung to her unexpected ally, with a glance of triumph over the counter. "Then you agree with me, doctor, as to its pernicious influence, its vice, and folly?"

"When Honor and I come back from our experimental meal, I'll let you know," the doctor said, with the ghost of a laugh; "we're acting on the principle of the drunken Helot. Mayn't I persuade you to come, too?"

He departed with another ceremonious bow. Mrs. Stone followed him, dumb with an intense surprise. Outside the shop she shook her skirt, as though to rid herself of other recollections than the smell

of cheese and bacon; then girded up her mental loins, and started on a crusade. She knocked at each cottage door, thrust in a leaflet, aiding its flight by winged words.

"Really, John must have the next announcements printed on larger paper," she said to herself, as she flattened the leaves on the pathway deeper into their graves. "And I think it had better be coloured paper; it certainly catches the eye."

She stopped at the Blakes' gate, where Mary was at work in the garden, snipping off the dead flowers from the bushes of Michaelmas daisies. She straightened herself as she heard the click of the latch, then looked at Mrs. Stone as one may look at some intrusive cat.

"Don't let me stop your work," Mrs. Stone said graciously. "I'm sure it is a great credit to you to keep your flowers in such beautiful order. Those African marigolds are as good as any we have at the Vicarage, and the asters are better; they must be a later kind than ours."

"Did you want some seeds?" asked Mary. Let Mrs. Stone spread butter thickly as she would, her praises tasted like sour bread.

"Indeed, I should be much obliged. May I take a flower home with me; and may I leave this in exchange?" She hurried her last sentence, for Mary's surprise was evident. She offered the missionary leaflet. "The C.M.S., you know," she said rapidly; "it is the vicar's wish that all his parishioners should attend this interesting meeting for this most worthy object."

Mary laughed. "I'm afraid he will be disappointed. It's Brackney Fair, you know."

"Miss Blake, do you believe Satan is more powerful than the Church?"

Mary shrugged her shoulders with that delicate

supple adjustment of her lines that made every movement an artistic pleasure. "Norton people seem to find him more interesting," she said.

Mrs. Stone dropped her flower on the garden path. Inadvertently she trod on it, and its place knew it no more. "Is that your honest belief? Perhaps"—her voice took a poisonous edge—"Dr. Drury is going to chaperon you, as well as his daughter?"

"What are you talking about?" said Mary quickly.

Mrs. Stone waved aside the interruption, her tongue felt its way for unmistakable words. "His partiality for education in all its branches is well known. People suggest he has a reason for his kindness to your brother"—she waited to give the thought time to sink in—"I hoped that, long before this, you would have come and confided in me."

"Confided in you!" Mary's tone stung like a whip. She hacked at the bushes recklessly, her eyes were full of rage.

"Confided in me," repeated Mrs. Stone. "I have known you all your life; I knew your mother—good, honest woman that she was; and I have always been ready to sympathise, advise, and warn." She cooled as Mary's wrath grew red. "And I will not listen to those who call a motherless girl other things than merely wilful, headstrong, and undisciplined. You may trust me, Mary; and I only bid you take care."

Mary turned and faced her. "I've had enough of your insinuations," she cried. "Let me have the truth. What do you accuse me of?"

"Of nothing worse than imprudence—as yet. But I tremble for your future."

"How have I been imprudent?"

When Mrs. Stone thought it over afterwards,

there seemed little definite of which she could accuse Mary. "I don't think it wise to encourage Mr. Murray to come here," she said.

"I don't encourage him."

"I don't think Dr. Drury likes it."

"What Dr. Drury likes is nothing to me."

"Isn't there an understanding between you?"

Mary took a step across the box border to the path. She held open the gate. "There is no understanding between us," she said, and her face was pale. "I'm not thinking of marrying Dr. Drury, if that is what you mean. What I do think of is no business of yours. Now, if you have interfered enough, please go."

She pointed through the open gate with an air of command. Mrs. Stone had no choice but to obey. Yet she paused at the gate. "I was warning you for your own good," she said, and in her voice the warning became a threat. "Because I have seen girls like you—vain, unstable, and unprincipled—become the bond-slaves of sin. You are ashamed to be a respectable working woman like your mother, content to do your duty in the state of life to which you are called. A girl of your character soon becomes a girl of no character, remember that. Do you suppose——" The words were taken from her lips in sheer surprise. As she worked herself up in her virtue, so Mary worked herself up in her wrath. She said nothing, but she gripped Mrs. Stone by the arms and forced her out of the gate.

It was an undignified scuffle, but a short one. Mrs. Stone slipped on the clay outside, making a long, greasy smear on the ground. Mary slammed the gate, and went back to her work, cutting savagely. Mrs. Stone heard the scissors click as she picked herself out of the hedge.

"She's driving me to it," Mary thought, as the bush on which she wreaked her vengeance took blurred outlines before her. "Working woman, indeed, when her father would have been thankful to patch my father's boots! A girl of no character —what's hers, I'd like to know? Who cares? Murray's right: I'm beyond this beastly little place. I'm best away."

Thoughts surged about in her tumultuous mind; she could feel others stirring in the depths below. She seemed rapt beyond herself on the wings of her rage. She looked down on the dreary past, forward to the gorgeous future. The passion of her nature was at flood, sweeping down her rickety principles, her artificial restraints in its headlong race. Mrs. Stone's hand had opened the flood-gates; no obstacle stood between her and the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

BRACKNEY FAIR was in full swing by the time Honor and Dominick reached it. All day the booths had been deserted, but night brought in the folk from twenty villages round. A circle had been roped in on Brackney Common, near the old Danish barrow, and further fortified by tents and caravans. Their wheels crushed the furze-bushes and bilberries, and their horses ate of the short, sweet grass.

To the children it seemed as though a fairy town had sprung up in a single night ; the heavy sky was on fire with the glare of the lights which broke in sulphur and scarlet through the dun smoke overhanging the encampment. To right and left stretched the long, uneven lines of grass, a mysterious earthen sea whose waves rolled up to the very heart of the Fair. Overhead the moon kept a solemn watch on the proceedings.

Dominick was caught by a strange fancy: he wondered if the shriek of the steam organ, the snap of the rifle-shots, the smell of naphtha and sawdust were carried up to her, and if she smiled with that sphinx-like look of hers at man's efforts at self-pleasing. He was seized with a sudden sense of revolt, a passionate hatred of the crowd—puppets dancing for the scorn of the gods. Above the

naphtha torches flaring on the foot-stained trodden grass he saw the infinite velvet of the sky; above the crack of the cheap rifles in the shooting gallery, and the medley of tunes where the horses whirled in the giddy-go-round, shrieking Satanic defiance to the silence of the night; above the shouts of the men, who caught the girls in their arms and swung them round to the stamp of hundreds of feet, he heard the thin, derisive laughter of the gods. His face grew hot, his hands clenched, in shame of himself and all humanity.

He looked quickly at Honor, then at her father, to see how it affected them. Honor was watching with a quiet interest, untouched by fear or disgust. He felt angry with the grave purity of her unflushed face, at the lack of trouble in her eyes. She was accepting the scene, and he hated her acceptance of it. Its vulgarity, its shamelessness said nothing to her soul. She thought neither of herself nor of the gods. She was only observant.

He felt in his pulses the tingle of a more refined allurement. Imagination painted what the life of pleasure should be—a thing as apart from this vulgar foolery as it was remote from the quiet stars.

Dr. Drury looked on the performance with an amused smile. He bent his head, or swung his stick gently to the time of the discordant sounds. His eyes took in rapidly the ring of wooden horses, brown, white, spotted, pie-bald, reduced to a whorl of grey mist, circling always more quickly to the maddening tune. The same tolerance was turned on the shouldering heated crowd, that mad mass of pleasure-seekers. Perhaps he felt it all as a curious primitive sacrifice to some barbaric god—the smoke, the taint of heat, drink and dirt; the acrid scent of orange peel rising as a strange incense; just as the shrieking organ, with its imitative drums and brassy

trumpets, made a litany of praise. Turning, he caught Dominick's look.

"Do you *like* it?" asked the boy, in violent protest. He remembered a certain speech concerning the desecration of a beautiful silence, and his eyes looked scorn on the speaker. The doctor took hold of the boy's elbow. "A witches' Sabbath has its instructive side," he said quietly, "so long as one doesn't join the dance."

"Who'd want to?" asked Dominick.

* * * * * *

They passed through the line of booths, caught in a whirl of the smell of sail-cloth and new rope, and thick with indistinguishable odours. The flares spat down spurts of lighted oil; the crowd spat fragments of orange peel. Dominick slid on the greasy ground immensely ashamed of himself. They swung in the boats with the noisy crowd, Dominick and Honor in one fine scarlet monster with a dragon's head, Dr. Drury alone and meditative in another. One girl addressed him as "Old gentleman," and proposed her company. Dr. Drury courteously declined the honour, while Dominick went as red as his own swing-boat for shame. They threw for cocoanuts in a loud-breathing circle, threw crookedly till Honor broke the run of ill-luck and won two nuts and a dozen cheers. They journeyed to the giddy-go-round loaded with their spoil. "Am I in the way of your enjoyment?" asked the doctor of them both. Their answer was truthfully encouraging. He mounted a fine specimen of the breed, a livid pink horse, and spun round to the tune of "Killarney." He was thankful when the wild ride was done, and prompt to acknowledge the justice of the name. "I've had sixpennyworth of giddiness to its

limit," he said, as he made his difficult way out of the booth. A look at the mermaid caught off Yarmouth revived him, and he pursued his course in search of new adventures. The house was full for "Maria Marten," so the trio took another turn among the stalls, ending up with the dancing booth on the far side of the Fair.

They leant on the rope-railing enclosing a space of reeking ground. Foot slips had stripped the turf from the soil; heel-marks dented the short grass; bits of greasy paper and orange peel were trodden in by the dancers. It was the monster ball proclaimed in the advertisement. Naphtha flares were fixed in holders round the ring; on the right was a refreshment tent, from which drifted out the fumes of stale beer, sharply perceptible even in that tainted air. To the left was a rival cocoanut shy, and the thud of wooden balls knocked loudly on the canvas screen.

Across the way a cheap-jack bawled his advertisements from a cart, his wares spread out before him; at the back, the swing-boats seemed to kick the skies. All round were crowds going or coming, or stopping to criticise the dancers with the humour of their kind. Dominick saw the monstrosity of the dresses, the exaggerated hats, the coarse, shining faces in the flickering lights. His face was hot, his pulses beating wildly. In his own way he was dancing—dancing a strange solitary dance, such as may have been danced in groves among the silent hills. He watched the crowd in a frenzy of sensual refinement—a rage because it stripped him of some golden illusions. Elbows flew faster with the quicker tune; it seemed to Dominick as if they swept him into the current in spite of his struggles.

Out of the refreshment tent crept a thin white kitten, its plaintive voice sounding shrill above

the din ; it stole like a shadow into the circle of dancers, sliding among the trampling feet. Faster and faster whirled the figures, shouting now, or laughing in breathless imbecility. Feet trod more recklessly, gestures grew unrestrained ; the dance became an orgie. Even Dominick forgot disgust in his share in that mad excitement. It was as though the madness of the dancers communicated itself to the onlookers—as though emotion were strong enough to cleanse it from vulgarity.

Behind them some of the crowd danced in the way between the booths, a man shouted meaningless words into his ears, a woman clapped her hands. Infection of excitement took hold of Dominick; the strength of the crowd entered into him, his eyes began to glow strangely, his refinement vanished in the stronger atmosphere. His head swam ; he began to mutter hoarsely, then to call, without knowing what he said.

But Honor watched untouched. She looked in his face, he saw her not ; touched his arm, and said something which he did not heed. The next moment she was over the rope, and into the surging, plunging crowd. There was a roar of laughter, then shouts ; Dominick was deaf and blind. Honor was caught in the swirl, her little scantly-skirted figure buffetted and thrown about ; but before her father could make headway through the press she was back again. And in her arms was the white kitten.

The crowd cheered her then, and the suddenness of that cheer woke Dominick. Honor was very pale, but quite composed ; her father had her by the hand. " Let us go ; please, let us go," she said.

As they made their way through the mob, a sturdy fisherman touched Dr. Drury's shoulder. He had been a bitter critic years ago.

"If yon's your rearing, she'll credit you," he said.

Dr. Drury raised his hat slightly—his courtesy was the thing most hated in him: "I thank you for the compliment," he said, and so passed on.

It was good to them all to be in the open air once more, on the lower level of the common, where nothing remained of the Fair but the reflection of its lights in the sky and the attenuated echo of its tunes. Dominick trembled, as though with cold. Honor pressed close to her father's side. "It wasn't wrong, was it? It would have been killed in that crowd. I couldn't help doing it," she said.

Dr. Drury's words were temperate. "No, not wrong, Honor; not even theatrical—as you did it."

"It was a beastly place," said Dominick, with emphasis.

The long road wound before them, among the level coast fields spread silver to the moon. Intense peace seemed to hush the earth to a holy silence. They passed beneath the stunted oaks arched over the shadow carpet at their feet. Far off, and indescribably aloof from the peace of the earth, sounded the muffled thunder of the sea.

"What makes people so fond of noise, I wonder?" Honor said. Both she and Dominick breathed deep in the sweet night air.

"Then you didn't enjoy it, children?" The doctor's face was grimly pleased. Once again Dominick caught himself speculating on the contemptuous amusement of the gods.

"No," said Dominick, and "No," said Honor, in a breath. It was Honor who probed further into the sources of their displeasure.

"Need people be happy only in one way?" she asked. "Must it always mean noise and heat and

smoke and cruelty?" She cuddled the kitten closer to her as she spoke.

"And that awful music!" said Dominick, with a shudder.

"When pleasure passes a certain limit it is always cruel," the doctor said emphatically. "That is, when anyone harms another to please himself. He is getting on that way when he forgets there is a chance of harming others." He turned to Dominick with a whimsical smile. "You abused the music—it's another way of saying what I mean. Pleasure, like music, grows brutal when the brasses drown the strings—in other words, when your senses swamp your knowledge of what is fitting."

They walked on in silence. Honor held thought in abeyance while she soothed the kitten in her arms. Dr. Drury let his mind play ahead on the future of two lives, and turned its light backward on the pages of his own. But Dominick's mind was in a tumult, full of confused contradictory emotions. Disgust and dread shouldered shrinking curiosity, frail spiritual wishes pleaded with lustier desires. Something was wrong in the making of pleasure if it could breed such pain.

He took home with him the seeds of some new thoughts, the first thrill of some new emotion. Yet he was satisfied that the Fair was "beastly." He hated to think of it, and Mary would expect to hear.

A light burned in the sitting-room; he opened the door. "Well, you didn't lose much by not coming," he began, then looked round him at the empty room. He dashed upstairs. Silence greeted him. He hammered on the door of the servant's room. She put out her head in a picturesque disarray of curling pins.

"Good gracious, Master Dominick," she said

pettishly, "I couldn't think what it was, unless the house is afire! What do you want?"

"I want Miss Mary," answered Dominick.

"Miss Mary ain't come home." The clock in the kitchen struck eleven, the sound echoing up the well of the staircase.

"Not come home?" repeated Dominick, counting the strokes. He was surprised, a little afraid.

"No, she ain't," and the door was slammed in his face. He turned away and went downstairs again.

Supper was left on the little table in the dining-room, but he was too anxious to eat. He went to the window, and stood looking out on the darkness. On the table lay a letter; he took it up mechanically, opened it, and read it.

There was no room for further doubt. Mary had gone.

CHAPTER XII.

MARY's letter was explicit to the point of brutality. She seemed to have flung away, not only sense of shame, but its reticence as well. In Dr. Drury's fantastic phrase, the brasses had drowned the strings. In her flight she listened to the trumpeting of her senses, her brazen ambitions which made degradation a ladder to a throne.

The full-blooded seventeenth century would have been her fitting hour; in the emasculated nineteenth century she was an anachronism. There was something in her outlawry that spoke of a more lavish age, more savage strength. She fought for her liberty through the power of her sex, not, as other women have done, through abdication of that power in favour of sexless intellect. Mary knew wherein lay her special gift—in the glory of the body which the gods had given her. This supreme talent she was prepared to invest.

Dominick read and re-read the letter, understanding little save the fact that she had gone. His had not been the training to provoke precocious knowledge of his birthright, nor to estimate the gulf that lies between man and woman, the sexual antagonism over which passion builds a temporary bridge.

He learned from her letter that she expected to be held accursed; clamoured, indeed, for those

curses as though they were blessings, a tribute from the weak to the strong. She demanded her tribute to its uttermost farthing. There was no defence offered in her letter, and no excuse. She spoke as a child might speak of playing some new game. But the toys were souls and bodies.

Practical considerations were long in thrusting themselves on Dominick, speculation kept their forms away. He was more interested than emotional, more anxious to find out the motive of her action than to grieve over herself or him. Something appealed to him in the outright defiance of an incomprehensible law; the callousness of her arguments gave them fictitious strength. She experimented with herself, as she held she had every right to do, for the furtherance of her aim.

She became Murray's mistress as a means to an end. There was no hint of love in her letter, nothing but reiteration of the once-told tale. She could not serve in heaven; she must found a kingdom for herself. She implied the neighbourhood of that kingdom.

The ban-fires were lit in her, and round them danced licence and liberty till their forms seemed one and the same. In the sacred name of liberty she slew her freedom, looking for the larger life in the symbol of death. Instinctive modesty, cultivated repression made fuel for that sacrificial pyre; she hove up her old gods to the flames, in a paroxysm of excited ambition to see their reincarnation in the new. She made herself both god and priestess, slaying herself that she might live.

Dominick's heart beat in sympathy as he read the words again. They appealed to the revolutionary spirit which hides in every heart for its fruition in a wider life. He had revolted against the sensuality of the Fair, he was uplifted by Mary's

rebellion. Yet the root of each lay in the same enormous egoism, in the culture of personality to the point of aggression.

The lamp flared heavily, a gout of copper smoke rising from the blackened chimney; the curtains bellied and fell again in the rising wind. But Dominick sat by the open window, sensible of no chill, seeking in his mind the cause of things. Outside, the quiet darkness seemed teeming with hidden life. To him it was as though a revelation of some glory were approaching, heralded on the wings of the wind. It seemed as though everything must be made clear if only he could hold his mind in tension long enough. The gods laughed at him no longer. They whispered in his dull ears, pressing knowledge on him through symbols. Beyond rose the hoarse murmur of the sea.

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While Dominick sat waiting his great revelation, balancing his soul in his hands, Dr. Drury hurried from the Farm. A similar letter had been left for him. He had lived long enough and widely enough to recognize that the moral sense is more a national than a personal gift; and that in transgression of his country's moral laws a man sins more as a citizen than as an individual. Free marriage seemed less hideous in itself to him than to more conventional people. It was not Mary's action which staggered him, but its callousness.

He hurried to Dominick, not so much to condole with him as to protect him from a sense of cruelty. The letter was so cruel in its practical details, so cold in its attention to the business in hand. Mary was of age, free to judge for herself. If it was necessary, Dominick could apply to his relations, but she hoped Dr. Drury would undertake his guardian-

ship. She mentioned money matters, explaining clearly how things stood. There were no intricacies in her mother's simple will; she had that sublime faith in Providence which takes no precautions. The way was straight for Mary to do as she would. In briefest terms, she resigned her guardianship, throwing off the last shred of responsibility, the last rag of law.

Dr. Drury misjudged her, and it made his visit difficult. The boy started as the doctor came up to the lighted window, believing his great revelation had come. The doctor's face looked grey in the smoky lamp-light; Dominick stretched out his hands; the tension broke.

"I don't understand; I don't understand," he sobbed childishly.

And the revelation was unfolded to him in the smoky lamp-light, not in the glory of the stars.

CHAPTER XIII.

For six years Dominick lived in the home of his ancestors without disturbance of his peace; then came the time of transition, bringing his eager feet to the gates of freedom.

When his legal guardian handed over her authority to Dr. Drury, the shock which shattered his childhood tamed him for awhile, set him apart from other boys. Gratitude bred acceptance of monotony; he floated on still waters. All his force was poured into his work, and there was red-hot force in Dominick. Never had master such a pupil, one who hammered himself into stranger shapes with a more intense passion for knowledge. It amounted to intemperance. Dr. Drury was driven to the use of the curb; but, as he said, it was like trying to chain the horses of Manannan Mac Lir, Dominick's pace was quicker than the waves of the sea.

Outward events troubled him little; his mind was wrapped up in the glories of the past. The death of Dido at Carthage concerned him infinitely more than the death of the Duke of Northwyk in his own village. The tenants wore mourning, and found ample material for gossip—the Duke's had been a "bad death"—but the interests, like the politics of Norton, were outside Dominick's scope. When the Duke was buried, Dominick excavated a Danish barrow on his own account without per-

mission on Brackney Common. When people spoke—Mrs. Stone among them—of the new Duke who died just in time to be buried next his uncle, Dominick stared. Village opinion had it that his studies had turned his brain. He took no interest in local cricket, very little in the races and regattas which made the Broads so busy in the summer season. He had a crude scorn for the trifles which sweetened the lives along the water-side, feeling in himself the need of greater things. Honor sympathized with cheap pleasures and small excitements, nor held herself above the pride of bodily strength. She rejoiced when Joe Clarke won the swimming match, and wished Dominick had entered his name for it; but Dominick shrugged his shoulders and quoted heroic deeds of an older day. And as his memory was apt, and his stock of sagas immense, Honor learnt something of the poetic worth of a man's legs, while Joe treated all his friends to the full practical value of his prize. Dominick met them staggering home by moonlight, and despised them. The heroes who filled his mind could drink a hogshead, and outwit an enemy in the same hour; but there were giants in those days, remote from the agues and cramps and monotony of the marshes; fighters as well as drinkers in the days when the gods walked on the earth with men.

Dominick was fluent and picturesque in his contempt of the poor present, the day of trivialities which oppressed him. "We live in minutes," he said once to Honor scornfully, with the need within him for immensities. And as every minute to Honor was made of sixty seconds full toll, Dominick found her ambitions unworthy of encouragement. He lived in and for himself, and for some vague extravagant future which beckoned him.

And as he grew out of his boyhood the creative instinct fired him; he longed, less to know, than to manifest his knowledge, to express himself, to pour out of his own full vessel into other empty ones. He began to watch and weigh his own personality, to find an intense interest in himself and his future; an interest he felt must be communicable to the world without, as it fired the subtler world within himself. And he longed, with an angry longing, for something against which to measure his strength.

Soon it dawned on him that he had no standing in the eyes of men. He was only Dominick Blake, a boy yet under tutelage. "Schoolboy," his some time companions called him, with true yokel contempt for unpaid brain-work. And all Dr. Drury's philosophy seemed a poor thing to Dominick when he heard the comments of his little world. He began to feel the fine edge of rebellion against circumstance, to measure the possibilities of the present, and to weigh them with his own worth. He felt, and, perhaps, felt truly, that so much energy could not have been given him as an empty gift, charming him from his real life to phantom adventures. He felt them as prophecies. Suddenly, in his opening consciousness, he saw the value of the wider life. Quite suddenly, too, was borne upon him the notion of his own responsibilities, the duty he owed himself as man, the worth of his future to the world. The spirit of knight errantry was his for the hour. Vague ideas had floated in his under-consciousness that now leaped up fully armed. He was astonished as much at his own growth as at his possibilities. And the village seemed to hem him in with iron walls. He felt as though some vampire sucked his strength from him, draining out more than the mere life-blood in the

infinitely valuable essence of his being, his faith in himself and his destiny.

He was wasted, he told himself fiercely, in that house of bondage, while life moved to quicker measures for other men in other places. He knew boys gone from the narrow village, gone out to the wider world to meet their fate. Not gorgeous fates for any one of them, not the fate that beckoned his nascent ambitions—service in the ranks, or before the mast, apprenticed to this, that, or the other trade in Norwich, arduous ill-paid work—but still work that took them from the stagnant life, the stale marsh air they had inhaled with their first unconscious breath.

Of what use his finer knowledge in the marshes? A savage could do better than himself—live in the open, satisfy that unknown quantity, his soul, with less trouble to himself than the filling of his stomach with daily bread; his god, Sufficiency, an accommodating god, whose girth expands with richer seasons, and who tightens his belt of his own good grace in leaner years.

But Dominick's god was a jealous god, of insatiable appetite, dream-fed, of no pity; a god who burned his worshippers with unquenchable fire. By the light of that fire Dominick gauged his ignorance, the learning he valued, the lore he had gathered with such pain. He knew so little of his birthright, where the marsh-men, the boys at work in their shops and factories, the soldier and the sailor seemed to know all. Their inheritance came with their outgoing. The grandest song of all is the song of life; the highest ambition, the finest work, is living every minute of one's allotted time. And such knowledge is not acquired by the young in Norton-by-the-Sea.

Dominick felt himself like a squirrel in a cage,

running round and round a foolish wheel for no purpose. He wanted to turn the wheel for his own ends; he wanted to know his use, his purpose in the world; he grew bitterly ungrateful for the chance that had been given him.

Better, he told himself bitterly, never to have drawn him out of the groove marked out for him by his true position. The sluggish animal life of the village, its cheap pleasures, its common tasks might have satisfied him. But Dr. Drury had lifted him up from the clay, and ordered his goings in the road of discontent. He was useless as a son of the soil, useless to himself and to his generation.

"It's time for him to begin to make himself," thought Dr. Drury, and put up with certain young insolences and impatiences, because long since he himself had owned a flaming heart, and knew the source of Dominick's disease.

"There's a good opening for you," he told the listening boy, "through the knowledge you are beginning to despise," and he preached a short sermon on examinations, the Civil Service, and various obtainable appointments, to which Dominick listened with the faith of one who dreams.

"I didn't understand it was to lead anywhere," he said listlessly.

"It leads first to exams.," said the doctor, and sent him up for the London matriculation. Dominick despised exams. after his first experience. He had a wonderful run of luck, but his work deserved success; it was respectable knowledge, and not crammed up for the occasion. Sometimes he wondered if Mary read his name in the papers, honours lying thick as leaves about it. Though he despised exams., he was not indifferent to success. "I should just have cut my throat if I'd failed," he said, and partly meant it.

Honor went in for the same exams., matriculation, intermediate, finals, passing with sufficient merit, but without the honours that companioned Dominick. He grew rather insufferable, taking the world under his control, patronizing both Honor and the patient teacher who had taught him all he knew.

Next came days of original research in various fields; a further sifting and testing of his knowledge specially devised to keep him out of mischievous thoughts. Dominick was unsuspicious, nor did he measure the trouble. Then came the result, in a book on the British Remains of Norfolk, by Roger Drury and Dominick Blake. His twentieth birthday was just at this period. Dr. Drury saw that his due share of credit came to him; he mothered him wonderfully, with the reticent wisdom of a man.

But Dominick handled his medals and certificates with a rather wistful pride, wondering whither they would guide him. It was his time of ferment, unknown forces working in him, driving him to an unknown goal.

"If I could get you a job in London, you would take it?" Dr. Drury asked him. Dominick's face was sufficient answer; it was eager to the point of pain. Before the knowledge of home-sickness comes the agony to be gone. Dominick's indifference was stripped from off him; his eyes were open at last to the meaning of his world. He was breathlessly desirous of freedom, callous to other suffering; he was at the finely brutal age of boyhood, secure in himself, wrapped up in his own egotism. The wings of the morning seemed to carry him beyond the trivial ambitions of boyhood. He felt himself so infinitely great in the ignorance of his youth.

Then came a time of impatient waiting, while Dr. Drury set in motion some of those wheels which move Government appointments. Many letters passed through Norton post office, weighted with Dominick's destiny; once again the village suspected political activities. Followed important interviews, then a year or more of anxious waiting. Dominick felt his age pressing on him heavily, and experienced several throes of despair. He counted the months remaining to him; the time seemed short enough between twenty and twenty-five, the finish of all things, as far as he was concerned.

It was a sorry year, yet all the while the Norns who ruled his fate were unwinding, smoothing, and clipping short the threads of other fates in his behalf. Interest did much, for Dr. Drury knew how to press a claim at the proper moment; but influenza did more. Unlike other promising men, Dominick's name was not doomed to automatic disappearance from the waiting list through lapse of years. The British Museum gave him his chance in time, and demanded his presence before the Civil Service Commissioners.

He thought over the plan in the silence of the sand-hills, reducing to some semblance of order the wild imaginations that peopled his mind. The sudden enlargement of his horizon blinded him; he held his breath, and drew in new ambitions even as he saw new worlds unfold themselves before his mental sight. Commissioners and the thought of exams. troubled him little; he knew the worth of his work—as an afterthought, the worth of his teacher. But he would be his own master, with his freedom in his hands. He could hear his freedom thundering in his ears.

He stood up in the blazing sunshine feeling as

though a glory suddenly surrounded him. Life called to him from the long brown marshes, from the sparkling sand-hills, and the dancing sea. He flung himself into the waves, bathing as it seemed to him in light—light that rippled round him as he swam in the clean freedom that comes with nudity. The waves felt like silk, caressing his skin with delicate touches; the water lay warm in the sunshine, lay like a great molten sapphire in a fretwork of golden gleams. He swam far out toward the purple sky-line, lifting cleanly over the dancing waves, rejoicing in the strength that was his. There was no tiring Dominick that morning; he seemed to bathe in the waters of life.

Dr. Drury watched him as he came from the sands with his wet towel round his neck. He walked as though the world were his own by right of his youth. At that moment, with the salt of the sea thrilling his body, the gay wind drying his thick hair, and the sunlight shining through his eyes into his heart, he was more god than man.

Honor met him on the terrace. The years had developed, rather than changed her; the face that seemed too old at twelve had waited through the gradual growth of womanhood for recognition of its beauty. It shone softly, but did not blaze. As of old, the brown hair was drawn back loosely from her forehead, the same quiet spirit looked out of the wide, grey eyes, and curved the delicate lips; but the acute lines of cheek and chin were softened into harmony, and the tall, slim figure wore a dress of reasonable length, and the feet were neatly shod. Honor had developed more than Dominick.

Boy and woman faced each other. The strong June sunlight fell full on them, bringing out each subtle line and tone. Dusk head bent to blonde, blue eyes sought grey. Dr. Drury felt as though a

hand reined back his heart. In that moment he read the motive underlying the patient years, realised the brother he had given his child. And womanhood was born out of due time, while manhood slept.

"Have you heard?" Dominick asked her eagerly. "Has your father told you that my chance has come at last?"

"Yes, he told me. It's splendid for you, isn't it? and he says you needn't worry over the exam."

The speech nipped Dominick's budding pride; his tone altered. He swung the towel in his hand till its sandy fringe dripped on the gravel path. "I wasn't thinking of exams.," he said loftily. "I'm thinking of my chance."

Then he poured out at great length and with some arrogance the glories of his future. It was much more important than it sounded. Of course, if an ignorant person (Mrs. Stone, for instance) heard that one was taking an appointment at the British Museum, she would suppose that subordinates swept floors and dusted statues. But, as a matter of fact, one was the Oracle of the Nation. Problems were submitted, and one pronounced judgment on books, pictures, china, or autographs. People always bowed to the National Authority; it was maintained for that purpose. Did Honor understand its enormous importance? Honor understood completely.

Dr. Drury thought his knowledge of Irish would stand him in good stead. Of course, the study of that beautiful but highly unpronounceable language originated with Honor, but, then, Honor had a Saxon tongue, while the Celt spoke through his lips. Owned, too, that, strictly speaking, that which came from Ireland should return to Irish soil; but in the meanwhile, till the conscience of

the Sassenach was touched to restoration, he profited by the stolen goods.

Could Honor yet understand the difference between *Tá sé*, and *Is é*, and *bionn sé*. How they had laughed together at her early puzzles! As he spoke, memory painted a picture for him. A small shy boy, and a smaller girl, walking down a leaf-strewn path towards the mere. The boy spoke in his memory: "Is a celt a weapon? I thought it was a race." Echoed, also, the little girl's reply. For the moment he shifted uneasily, red for his childish ignorance. "Well, we can, none of us, know everything," he added awkwardly, and went on with the list of his own special qualifications. He believed there was a good deal of writing and cataloguing, and general understudy of superiors; but Government appointments were like ladders, one walked upstairs, as a matter of course, and eventually one would be Head.

Dominick had several revolutionary ideas respecting the origin of religion, ideas he had never explained to Honor, connected with Celtic mythology, and, of course, these would be proved in his work. Such work would be worth doing, would cut a notch in history, perform a surgical operation on blind eyes. It was quite time to begin to make himself; after twenty-one a man rusted in a stale environment. In the course of the next few years Honor would have her eyes opened indeed. By that time he would have proved that faith was born in the Land of the Setting Sun; that, in fact, the Wise Men came from the West, and not from the East of popular tradition.

At present he was merely jolly glad to go. Didn't Honor sympathise? Honor sympathised extravagantly. Didn't she envy him? Perhaps she envied him a little, but she was very glad as

well. The glory of the prospect, like the brightness of the sunshine, dazzled him. He had no eyes to see what the Fates were doing for Honor.

That week took Dominick up to town to try his fortune. He was not entirely sorry that business called Dr. Drury in the same direction. In spite of certitude, he wanted some one to confide in, to compare questions and answers, to gauge for him the correctness of his replies. Dominick's self-esteem rarely outlived comparison. Untried, he appraised his powers far more justly than when he put them to a public test. In the one case, he observed himself, measured himself; in the other, he watched men measuring him, scaling him in a balance weighed down by Teutonic prejudices. His fatal self-consciousness stood in his way. He felt his examiners were personal enemies, determined to give him no chance.

Yet though many men did excellently—there were ten candidates for the one post—Dominick excelled them all. Perhaps the liquid Irish rolling fluently from his well-cut lips found favour in Saxon ears; perhaps no other man save himself had studied the roots of that complicated mythology as he had done. In any case, the day was won, and in due course Dominick was appointed to a second-class clerkship for one year on probation.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEFT to herself, Honor improved the shining hour after her own fashion, not by self-analysis and mental balancing of unequal lots, or vague unsatisfactory dreaming, but by a practical cleansing of the Farm, such as it had not known for many a long day. The unaccustomed bones of Pierre and Alphonse ached with the labour of carpet-beating, and their poor lungs were filled with dust from the clapping covers of countless books. Honor was ruthless; such a chance occurred but once in a life-time—much like the chance provided Dominick by a charitable Fate—and she used it to its last inch.

Then, when weary Pierre and Alphonse went off to well-earned cigarettes and sirop, Honor took long walks, or swam out in the changeful sea. She was not lonely, for her mind found company, even as it had done in childhood, in the smaller lives around. A fine white cat companioned her, the enlarged edition of the kitten she had rescued from Brackney Fair so many years ago. Smike repaid her ten-fold with uncatlike gratitude for his salvation. Then, too, she observed intelligently the growth of plants, making a special study of their lore; the manners and customs of birds, with a cautionary eye on Smike, in whom the old Adam still lived; the habits of insects; not with analytic

science, but with a strange reverent pleasure making her life full. The country was never for one moment dull to Honor; from the dewy grass at daybreak to the grey hush of evening over the marshes, she found good in everything.

Natural history had no charms for Dominick; his interests had been bounded by the early human life within the neighbourhood; the wraiths of ancient Britons sailed the rivers for his benefit, to the sound of quacking coots, and the whirr—dry as the wind in the sedges—of countless wings. He grew eager over the traces of an old fort with its thrown-up earth-works marked to the expert eye under its green grave; but he cared little for plant-lore, save where it touched humanity, or promised poetry by the magic of its name.

Honor stood a moment to watch the gilded mist peel away from the marshes, to follow with her eyes the flight of a plover across the red-brown background, now indigo, now white, according to the flutter of its wings. Then picked a giant reed to brush away the flies, and looked up to find Mrs. Stone filling the narrow pathway.

"Good-morning, Miss Drury. What is the news I hear?" The Norfolk voice was strained and thready as of old, but the sallow face had gained new lines, the thin hair whitened in the burden of the years.

Honor watched the smoke from the funnel of a passing steamer, gold and royal purple in the sun. "News? I don't think there is any," she repeated vaguely.

"Why has Dr. Drury been compelled to dismiss Dominick? And have you met the Duke?" Mrs. Stone demanded, brushing aside subterfuge as she laid low the grass heads with her sun-umbrella.

Honor's eyes opened wide. "Dismiss Domi-

nick?" she echoed. "I don't know what you mean!"

She saw a gleam of intelligence cross the thin, sallow face, and thought of a crow scenting carrion.

"Oh, village talk," said Mrs. Stone significantly.

"Please explain to the village that Dominick is gone up to London for an examination," said Honor. "I thought people knew as much; I know they look at all our letters."

"My dear child, of course they take an interest in you all. So do I. Even the fact of the new Duke—did you know he was just back from India?—can't make one forget your concerns. So Dominick is gone—gone for good, I suppose?"

"I hope so," said Honor, meaning exactly what she said.

"Ah! then you are my way of thinking. My poor, dear child! You can't think how we—dear Lady Rebecca Hythe and I—have felt for you all these years. We always considered it so indiscreet of Dr. Drury to take under his roof one of that sad family; they could never hope to turn out really well, though one was always sorry for poor Dominick. What's bred in the bone, you know. Who, alas! can forget what happened to his sister? There is no news of her, I fear, poor wretched girl!"

Honor looked away over the marshlands and the dancing sea.

"Is there any news?" Mrs. Stone asked more directly. Honor brought her eyes back to the sallow face, its inquisitive mouth agape, its look of insatiable, vindictive curiosity.

"I don't know," she answered truthfully. "I didn't ask. So the Duke is coming to Northwyk," she added, in some haste to change the subject. "What an excitement for the place!"

"I hope he will do something for the parish church," Mrs. Stone said doubtfully, with half her mind in search of news of Mary. "The roof is in a shocking state, and the walls want whitewashing. So—talking of the Blakes—you have heard nothing of that unhappy creature?"

"We hope she isn't unhappy," said Honor quietly.

"Has she married that dreadful man?"

"I don't know. Is it any business of mine?" Honor added in desperation.

"Well, Dr. Drury seemed to countenance her in some degree by giving a home to her brother. One would not be hard on the poor boy, he has some good qualities; but perhaps your father's idea of discipline is not the one to show him the wisdom of the narrow way."

"Father never bullied either of us," Honor said impartially.

"Bully! My dear Miss Drury, I should never dream of using such a vulgar term. I merely meant——"

Honor looked her disconcertingly straight between the eyes. "Do you know," she said, "I think I would just as soon not know what you meant; I might misunderstand you, after all. Dominick is my friend, you know, and, of course, I think as he does about his sister." Then she took advantage of Mrs. Stone's stupefaction, and escaped from the insult of her companionship.

"There's something between them," thought Mrs. Stone, with the acumen born of thirty years' surveillance of village morals.

Honor had a strange notion that personality is detachable; not only that a person may leave something of himself in the air that he exhales, but that he must. Just as the breath of man

visibly leaves his lips on a frosty day, so, she felt, he breathes out invisibly something of his personality. Round Mrs. Stone the air felt thick with unholy suggestions, stagnant and unclean.

She shook off its influence in the soft, strong wind, expanding her chest, drinking the air through her nostrils, breathing deep of its purity. Then on again through the waist-deep reeds, following the entanglements of the trodden path. As she went, her thoughts and wishes flew to Dominick. She felt that he was doing well, that there was no fear of failure ahead of him, and her spirits danced in time with the sun-motes. She turned a corner, and drew near to the first of a row of flint-built cottages, whose back gardens were gayer with drying garments than with flowers. They flapped like so many flags on the drying lines. Inside the garden stood a man. He wore check trousers and a black tail-coat, neither over well-cut nor over clean. His face was that of a large, self-satisfied baby, with an upper lip abnormally long and wrinkled like old soap. Watery-blue eyes smiled behind gold-rimmed spectacles, and one hand carried a green butterfly-net. The other steadied him as, raised tip-toe, he smelled gravely and dispassionately at a large soft-water butt.

His attitude amazed Honor, but he seemed nowise disturbed at her approach. He looked round him, sniffed again, and gravely lowered himself to the ground. Then lifted a shapeless wide-awake hat from an immense bald head.

"Insanitary," he said, and tucked the bag of the butterfly-net within the rim. Sanitation had at last found its way to Norton. Honor wondered if she met the new inspector at his unpopular duties.

"Must find out things for one's self, while one's

new," he added; "the only way, you know; the only way."

"I'm afraid we aren't very modern at Norton," Honor said doubtfully; "but, you see, the wells are very brackish, and the people want soft water to wash in."

His mild, dim-sighted eyes focussed her. Tall, slim, and straight, an inch or more above his own level, with a plain skirt that blew round her in the wind, a white knitted jersey, and a white cap on her wind-blown hair, she looked as free from fear as a boy, as strong and self-reliant as an Artemis.

"People wash too often," he said gravely. "It is only the great sea which can cleanse us." He lifted his unshapely little body on tip-toes again to peer over the reeds, then made a sudden, inept dash with his net, returning empty-handed from his quest.

"Whose are those cottages?" he asked, searching the corners of his net.

"Sir Joseph Flint's, the brewer's," answered Honor readily.

He seemed a little abashed, asking in some confusion, "Not Northwyk cottages? I thought they were Northwyk cottages; but are you sure?"

"Quite sure; the Duke's cottages are further up the lane." Not a sanitary inspector, or one who knew but little of the place. He consulted a species of a plan which he drew from a large side-pocket, nodding and murmuring to himself the while. Then pouched his net again with a deft turn of the wrist, and waved his map rather helplessly. His voice had a little Scottish accent, rather insinuated than displayed, when he spoke again.

"Would you mind showing me the way? I will be very sorry to trouble you, but I have never been here before."

"No trouble," said Honor willingly, and thought it rather a shame to expect a poor old man—ill-sighted, too—to find his way in a strange place. He trotted alongside Honor, with his shiny, pink face turned sunwards, and his eyes peering quickly through their glasses on either side the way.

"Rack and ruin," he murmured presently; "rack and ruin. Oh, the sin of it and the shame! Oh, the confounded blackguards! the confounded blackguards—deserve six months for neglect of property!"

Honor realized that he spoke to all the airs that blow rather than to herself. She looked round for the rack and ruin, but saw only the wide marshlands filled with grazing cattle, the scattered red-roofed cottages, the green and umber of the trees.

"And this ground"—he stamped his little well-shod foot—"is holy!"

Honor knew it as well as he. Norton owns its sacred spot, where in more faithful days miracles were wrought for the conversion of unbelievers.

"Yes," she said, "this is Maid's Meadow; and just up there to the right are the cottages."

He beamed irrelevantly through his big glasses. "Maid's Meadow," he repeated, and took off his hat as he stood within the sacred ground. "What a lovely name, isn't it? And I suppose you know the legend, don't you?"

Honor nodded. "It's just one of those dear little legends one finds in Norfolk," she said. "Do you see that queer little heap in one corner? That's part of the 'Maid's' dwelling. She came over from Ireland ever so long ago, before the Danish settlers in this part of the world were Christianized at all, and made heaps of converts. And she looked after their bodies as well as their souls, which is so nice of her. It is said she first taught the

people to tan skins and to cook their food properly, but I don't know if it's true. When she died—she lived to be quite old—the people lapsed into paganism again, till she appeared in a ring of white light in this meadow, and made them all swear fealty to the Cross. It is said that their descendants filled Ely and Peterborough till the Normans drove them out. There are lots of Danish names, too, in the roll of S. Benet's Abbey."

The old man followed her eyes in their reverent journey round the level field. "It feels holy," he said without pretence. "And this is Northwyk ground, isn't it?"

"This is Northwyk ground," she assured him, "and there are the cottages."

"I wanted the meadow more than the cottages," he answered quickly, "and the painted lady more than either. Do you know her? I've never seen one since I was a boy."

Honor confessed to her acquaintance, though not in the marshes. The butterfly flourished at Norton. "You would be more likely to catch them nearer the Broad," she said. "Do you know Norton Mere, by Bullen's Farm? I've often seen them in the meadows."

"Where is Bullen's Farm?" he asked her.

"I'm afraid it's some way off." She felt full of pity for the little, trotting feet. "Perhaps a mile and half further on." She wondered if she might offer him the pony-cart; somehow he seemed as forlorn as he was ridiculous. But not mad; more like a child, perhaps, with a child's direct disregard of all except himself.

"I met a very terrible lady," he said, as they crossed a gap in the bramble-hung hedge. "She told me I was trespassing. Are we trespassing now?"

Honor looked doubtful. "This land belongs to the Duke of Northwyk; but he is never here, and no one interferes. I always come this way, and we are doing no harm. You see, it cuts off a big bit. I wish it could be made a short cut for the poor old people to the village, with a proper path." They kept scrupulously to the track beside the hedge, while the scent of ripened grass kept them company.

"You are a very kind young lady," her companion said at last, as Honor wrestled with the hasp of a heavy gate. His fat little hands were powerless to help her. "Do you live here? Do you mind telling me your name?"

"My name is Honor Drury, and I live at Bullen's Farm."

He stopped short, panting. "Honor Drury? Can you be the daughter of my old friend Roger Drury? Oh, the years and years it is since I've heard from him! India's a long way off for keeping up friendships, isn't it? and I've been in India for nearly nineteen years. Did you come here when your mother died? Bless her, what a dear soul she was! Yes, that's it; that's it. Poor old Roger, went quite strange, they said, for the loss of her. I daresay he never mentioned Robert Bruce?"

There was something wistful in the question. Honor pulled her mind from Scotland's hero to his inappropriate namesake. "Oh, yes," she said, eager to soothe the poor thing's mind. "A man who was with him at Trinity Hall—a barrister. He took the Law medal, father told me. He has often spoken of him."

"I am Robert Bruce." He proclaimed himself king in the words, then looked round at her with a child's slyness. "That's why I took up

entomology. The spider, you know; it seemed symbolic!"

"It must be very interesting," said Honor, with a soft little laugh.

"It is—oh, quite absorbing! No, not quite—almost absorbing! For, of course"—he looked dreamily across the curtseying, wind-swept grass—"there is a much more enduring interest in life than butterflies." Again he spoke to himself, and Honor wondered whither his thoughts had flown. To fame, the light which beckoned Dominick to fortune; though surely Bruce's fortune was nearly told—what phantoms or ephemera did he follow in his mind? She felt suddenly tender towards him, her father's old friend, with the tenderness which laughs softly with misty eyes. He walked on jerkily, talking as usual to himself.

"No, the society is not propagandist; never do, never do, to fish for converts. When the hour strikes, the neophyte brings his soul in his hands. How the wind sings in the grass-stems! Oh, that my dull old ears could hear the words of its song! I'd know, then, the root of the matter—'what God and man is,' as the poet says. That's mayweed, white mayweed, with a heart of gold, like that kind little girl—very kind little girl—Roger Drury's child. Heart of gold might hear the song of the blossoms and the wind in the grass." He peered in Honor's unconscious face, then dipped his head right and left to the wide wind-swept fields on either hand.

"That woman I met, now—that yellow woman, with Inquisitor's eyes—now, who is she, I wonder? Up to mischief, up to mischief; feeder on carrion. I saw it; oh, I saw it! Robert Bruce is nearly blind, but his astral sight is clear." He turned to Honor suddenly, and it seemed as though a film drew away

from his eyes; they were blue, with reddened lids, and their dreams had passed away.

"You must tell me about your father," he said quickly, and Honor saw the long upper lip dip over the lower one as though trying to hide or swallow his words. "Everything. How much money he makes—his books didn't sell at all in old days—how he spends it; if he pays his debts, or if he owes them. I owe him five pounds now; has he forgotten it? Remember, I've to make up years of ignorance: aye, nearly your lifetime."

"Father will like best to tell you everything himself," said Honor. "Will you be staying here long, as he is away just now."

"I go to Yorkshire to-morrow, but I will be returning almost directly. Is this the Farm?"

Honor swung the iron gate slowly over the flagstones. The mellow afternoon sunlight shone on a garden of white lilies, growing as they listed, wild as weeds. Beyond, the walls of the old house glowed in the ruddy drapery of crimson rambler roses. The scent of countless sweet old-fashioned herbs and flowers drifted down the long alleys of box and laurel. Robert Bruce looked round him dreamily, seeming to drink in something beyond the fragrance of the roses. "A happy man, and a sooth place," he murmured thoughtfully; "maybe, another Maiden's Meadow, and as holy."

"And you must rest here," Honor said, "and have something before you go and look for butterflies. There's cider and whiskey; which do you prefer?"

Bruce raised horror-stricken hands. "Neither, by all the gods, neither! Why, child, they're rank poison, simply rank poison to psychic development. Meat, too; meat's criminal. If all the world lived on maize pottage and spring water, all the world

would see the sights beyond its greedy, carnivorous, impure old carcass, and would know that pure life and pure diet are one and the same." He drummed his fat little hands on the table, while Honor fetched him a tumbler of water.

"Potatoes," he resumed solemnly on her return, "potatoes and all roots are the carrion of the vegetable world. Who would be eating them, grown in animal matter, rooted in impurity? Carrots, too; yes, and turnips. But nuts and grapes and apples, and all things that grow above ground in the divine air and sun—yes, and barley—man may eat unleavened barley bread, and save his soul alive. But the rest is forbidden fruit, and if man eat of it, he shall die."

He took the water, first holding up the glass to the light, and searching it with the scruples of a Jain. "If there be animalculæ therein, the Compassionate Lord pardon His servant, and hasten their evolution," he said, and swallowed quickly, Arian-fashion, at one gulp.

"But you kill butterflies?" said Honor.

"Kill them? Never. Catch them, yes; but I catch them only to bless them for their beauty, and let them go." His eyes looked mistily tender, and he set down the glass again. "Thank you, my dear, for your kindness to an old man; and here's my card for your father to let him know my address. I will be round again to see him, and you and he will come to see me, will you?" He fumbled in his pocket, bringing out a mass of tangled string, a little note-book, and six lumps of sugar, produced a card from the collection, and trotted out of the hall. She heard him talking to himself on the steps.

"Nice girl, very nice little girl, kind little girl. Gold heart like the mayweed. Glad I went, glad

I went." Then Honor laughed suddenly, and as suddenly felt herself unkind. Robert Bruce passed beyond the angle of the house.

A merry little breeze blew in at the open window, lifting the card from the table. Honor ran after it, caught it, and laid it down again in safer quarters. She glanced at it as she put it on one side. The card read: "Duke of Northwyk," and this time Honor laughed without a conscience-qualm.

CHAPTER XV.

TIME seemed short enough between the examination and the appointment. Dominick had much to discuss, more to do. Money matters afflicted him but little: he was sure that his pay, supplemented by his own income, was more than ample for his wants. It was Dr. Drury's uncomfortable duty to point out the prices of things, the objections to lodgings, the expenses of the cheapest kind of flat.

For the first time he gauged Dominick's supreme ignorance, also his abiding trust in others' honesty. No one cheated him at Norton. London was only a bigger Norton; why should people try to cheat him there? He was quite confident in his own powers, felt that he would know the right kind of place at a glance, and turned restive at warnings when Dr. Drury most unwisely attempted something of the kind. Naturally, Dominick liked best to buy his experience for himself, at first hand, instead of profiting by out-of-date experiences. "I shall get a flat near the Museum," he said, and recked nothing of crowded quarters, dark streets, and lack of air.

So he found a suitable flat, and thought of it with pride—almost as great a pride as when he realized that Bullen's Farm was legally his own

and Dr. Drury his tenant. He wished for no better one in either case.

He swaggered a little in the laurel alleys where he walked with Honor. It was more satisfactory to talk matters over with Honor ; she had no instructive recollections to relate, only questions to ask, and suitable interest to display. In her girl's way she bound her badge upon her knight, binding surer than she knew.

"On my soul," he said one evening, as the slender moon topped the hedge, a frail crescent in the cool, blue evening sky, "I believe you are the only thing I'll miss up there!"

The slow sweep of her gown against the grass-blades answered him. He turned to her, as she moved shadow-light against the dusky background of the laurels, took her by the elbow, as he had taken it a dozen times before, and asked his question, "And I say, Honor, you will miss me too?"

"I shall miss you a great deal," said Honor truthfully. Her tone was quite sisterly, but she felt more than she said.

"How much?" he asked imperiously, measuring, child-fashion as of old, a generous measure with his arms. "So much—more? What a pity I can't take you up to town with me?"

Honor said nothing. "Think of it," he went on, "after my day's work, fagged to pieces with a pack of fools, no doubt—you see, I'm not blinking plain facts, am I? There are sure to be a lot of fools about."

Honor agreed. "Of course, it must be very hard work," she said.

"Of course, and I shall come back to a lonely little place after eating a greasy chop at some grill-room, and then turn in without a word from anyone

who cares a straw about me. Men lead such a lonely life." Acute self-pity deepened his voice and darkened the blue of his eyes. Honor's sympathy, if she felt it, went unexpressed.

"I expect you will soon find friends," she said.

"Friends," echoed Dominick, luxuriating in his new mood; "do you really think that, Honor? What chance have I of making friends? Other men make them at school or college, but I've never had a chance; and I'm too old now to begin. I've caught your father's spirit—sort of hermit, you know—and other men's ways wouldn't be my ways; I'm not on their plane. You needn't laugh; it's a jolly serious thing to think of. Why, you know yourself how different I am from other men of my age."

"I think there's still hope for you," said Honor, with a little smothered laugh. Dominick's youth was never more evident than when he bemoaned his weight of years.

"You know I could never talk to anyone as I talk to you," he declared with fervour. To neither occurred the thought that patient listeners are rare, and as such to be grappled to one's heart with hoops of steel.

"A man never talks to a man as he does to a woman," said Honor, with insight beyond her years.

"No? How odd I never thought of that. Yet it is a question of friendship, isn't it?"

"I think so."

"And years of lonely living and hard work wouldn't alter my friendship for you, Honor, that I'll swear. But yours for me?"

"Oh, mine's good wearing stuff as well," said Honor.

Dominick turned and faced her on the dewy grass.

He saw her face etherealised by the thin moonlight, read the true depths of her eyes, and something unknown leaped in his heart like flame.

"I believe you," he said, catching his breath, "Honor, I do believe, if it was possible for me to come a howler and go to the bad altogether, that you wouldn't cut me. You'd keep a place for me, Honor; you wouldn't shove me into outer darkness." He saw that of which he spoke, saw it clearly in one horrible lightning flash of imagination; his voice shook as though the thing were true.

"But it isn't possible," said Honor firmly; "it shan't be possible; you couldn't fail."

"But if I did?"

Honor's grave eyes met his. "You said yourself it would make no difference to me."

"I want you to say it."

"It would make no difference," said Honor from her heart.

The evening silence seemed to breathe with irregular rhythm, surcharged with some new emotion. And Honor felt, in some curious indefinable way, that her feelings whispered to Dominick—shy feelings, that raised up barriers the nearer they drew to him; generous feelings, that demanded nothing in return; strange feelings, that made her eyes wet with a longing to heal, a desire to hold the boy from coming harm. Mother and maid were one in Honor's heart that hour.

And Dominick felt the evening influence in his own way. The air seemed full of sweeter scents, the hush of the sky spoke in its silences. He became almost poignantly aware of details;—years after called back the scene through the scent of mignonette, or the drifting of a breath-stirred gossamer across his face. "It's funny how one notices

things to-night," he said at last, brushing away his new embarrassment as he brushed away the cobweb.

"Notices things?" Honor repeated, snatching at her vagrant thoughts.

"Yes; odds and ends one's seen twenty times, but not noticed. For instance," he laughed a little, "I never knew you had such long eyelashes before. That's interesting, isn't it?"

"Very. One lives and learns; I never knew it myself."

"Better put it down in your diary to convince you when you feel doubtful."

"I will, and read it when I want to make sure how beautiful I am."

"I wish I had a photograph of you, Honor," said Dominick suddenly.

"That's easily gratified; you can do me yourself, if you like."

"To-night, by moonlight?"

"It's growing rather dark, isn't it? and would take ages to expose; but I don't mind."

Dominick went off for his camera, the same with which he had snapshotted the British remains of the county. Meanwhile Honor laughed at herself and the sentiment of the idea. The crescent moon still hung in the pearl and beryl of the sky. It was yet light, only individual colours were fading slowly from the flower-beds, leaving vague impressions of violet and warm brown in the shadows, and points of tarnished silver in the light. In the angle of the laurels the hedge had been lowered about a foot to give a glimpse of the mere. Close by stood a stone seat, thick with moss in its crevices, watched over by a stone Daphne, green as her surrounding leaves.

Honor waited, looking out over the mere, with her mind inconsequently repeating childish

memories, memories tangled with recollections of Dominick. The two inseparable lives were nearly severed now. She awoke to the present with a start, turned her back on the memory-laden Broad, and faced Dominick with his camera coming down the wide grass-walk.

Afterwards she wondered at the space her thoughts could compass in thirty minutes; she seemed to live her life over again.

They developed the negative that same night, and printed from it the following morning. It made an excellent ghost-portrait of Honor, and travelled to London in Dominick's pocket-book.

* * * * * *

The night before he went he spoke of his sister to Dr. Drury. Lately the thought of her had pressed upon his mind. He wanted to understand his duty to her, and once again it was Dr. Drury's pleasant task to help him over some misconstructions. Briefly, "Let her be," was his advice.

"Let her be!" cried Dominick fiercely.

"She seems to wish it. She is making her own road without reference to you; the chances are she wouldn't thank you for your interference."

"I don't want to interfere. How do we know what she has to say on her side?" Dominick asked, with brave impartiality. Though Mary had grown but a vague memory to him, it was strange how close she seemed to stand to-night. The rebel blood leaped in response. "How do we know she was so very wrong?" he said.

"Perhaps more foolish," was the doctor's dry answer. "She tried her strength against public opinion, and public opinion is only another name for the national conscience—a strong combination."

"Well, granting that she has chosen to break

the rules of the road they have laid down, do you blame her for it—without a hearing ? " Dominick's voice was pugnacious.

" My dear boy, I blame no one. But an independent thinker is always on trial. You no longer form part of an aggregate force ; you stand as an isolated atom, and it's your business to prove your right to your individual existence. If a man acts on his private judgment instead of on the collective opinion of his country, that country requires him to justify his actions up to the hilt. Then he is crowned as a hero, or pilloried as a knave, less according to his deserts than according to his powers of persuasion. I neither approve nor disapprove ; I state a fact, that's all." He shrugged his shoulders, and stretched out his hand for his pipe.

" It's the first time I've heard you defend public opinion," said Dominick, nettled at the shrug of dismissal.

Dr. Drury laughed and nodded. " I suppose I'm fool enough to give you the benefit of my own dear-bought experience. It mayn't interest you, it certainly won't influence you, to know that were I at your end of life, with my own painfully acquired knowledge, I'd choose to be a humble tramper in the dust of other feet. But, naturally, it's not till one has been bogged and bushed and scratched that one realizes the value of a laid road, nor appreciates the engineering capacity of one's forefathers. Personally, I think that men are probably safer and happier if they keep to the straight, old well-kept road, always remembering, however, that the roads were made by men, and not by gods, and, therefore, not judging the gods when they make a short cut for themselves. It all comes to a question of just self-measurement. The ordinary road-

way isn't wide enough for a god; but if you make one for yourself you must, in justice, prove yourself a god. And the gods are few."

Dominick breathed rather quickly. "Then you advise——?"

"I should never presume to advise my juniors," said the doctor drily.

"But I mean, is it personal experience? did you weigh yourself? You must have some reason for what you say."

"I found myself short weight." The voice was without bitterness, but when a man knows his limitations, his tone bears witness to his knowledge. "That came of mistaking myself for a god. But my experience need not be yours, you must judge for yourself, as your sister did."

At the moment Dominick felt as though he yearned for advice, even if he contradicted it the moment after. He felt he could not dispute the facts, but he desired intensely to dispute them. He wanted definite personal assurance, even a prejudice to give him foothold, instead of the vague impersonal suggestions.

"The worst that can happen to anyone is to think himself a god, and find he isn't," he said heavily, with the shadow of his old dread enfolding him.

"I think not; but it's a personal question."

"What then?" Something of Dominick's desire was in his voice.

"To my thinking, the worst is to refuse to take the old road again when one realizes one's mistake. Thinking one's self ideal, instead of acknowledging one's reality. It seems like living a lie to one's self, which I believe to be rather worse than living a lie to others." He spoke indifferently, but he meant what he said.

"Could anyone turn back?"

"It depends on one's pluck, I fancy. It takes considerably more than cutting a new road, though one doesn't always see it. But"—he waited a moment, brushing aside the gouts of smoke—"it is something, mind you, to feel honest with one's self. After that, perhaps one can afford to despise public opinion."

"I wish I knew," said Dominick, with his eyes on the empty fireplace.

"Perhaps till one does, it may be safest to assume one is merely human," said Dr. Drury, with less sympathy than usual.

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It was the vicar who reproached him for neglect of opportunity, catching him at an unwary moment. Colossal dangers faced a boy of Dominick's type. Dr. Drury was his brother's keeper, let him take heed he was not his betrayer, too.

Dr. Drury snapped the lid of his tin botanical case, and adjusted the strap. "Dominick takes himself too seriously," he said. "I hope I have suggested to him that it is his greatest danger."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE plan of the "manor and desmesnes" of Castle Northwyk, as the old maps had it, was in the form of a British cross. The limbs of the cross were flat roads, well laid, well made, of Roman origin; the circle formed the castle, with its surrounding dyke and wall.

Right and left of the broad, white roads rolled fat pastures, giving way to heath, marsh and sand, brook and bog, more picturesque than productive. Belts of scrub kept off the fiercest sea blasts; for the rest, wood and water, field and fell were evenly divided.

Castle Northwyk was well known, well photographed, the numbers of carbon prints embellishing the Great Eastern railway carriages—full front, west front, keep, entrance, and the like—running Sandringham pretty closely. It had historic interest for antiquaries, sacramental interest for churchmen.

First, British fort in olden days, then subject to the Roman eagles; valued, too, strategically, for its domination of the unconquerable marsh; fortified, as the still-standing keep showed, its marvellous masonry defying alike the artillery of men, and the stronger engines of Nature, the salt breath of the sea, the shrill north-east winds, thunder, lightning, storm and tempest, from which the pious

owners prayed deliverance to their gods or their saints, according to the fashionable creed of the day.

The castle stood high up above the surrounding flats, built on an artificial mound, sacred to Dis in Pagan days, where the bent firs and gnarled oaks stooped under the burden of the winds; testifying, too, perhaps to the greater burden laid on them by the worship of their ruling deity.

Later came the Roman, wresting from British Dis his holy ground. The mount became sacred to Venilia, goddess of flowers and all things fair. Strange deeds and strange prayers filled her garden; incense burned in her honour on the little ram's-horns altar (now in the British Museum), and antiquaries still point out the line of brickwork where flowed her wonder-working spring.

Later still, Christianity seized on the prize, and dethroned Venilia in honour of the Virgin Sexburga, raising a chapel and a convent in her name. Then stout Paganism had its turn with the turn of the wheel, the Danes robbed Sexburga to pay Freya; drove out the nuns—with nose-slittings and other abominations—and installed other votaries. Once again the goddess of the gardens rained her blessings on holy ground.

Then came conversions; then, under William, religion robbed again, overthrew the Danish wooden buildings, destroyed the altars and uprooted the groves. Then, purified by fire and exorcised by holy water from Venilia's well, the great Northwyk convent of Contemplatives rose up, phœnix-wise, in honour of that "flower of virgins," S. Eustochium; under whose patronage it flourished largely through successive centuries, till the royal robber Henry took it from its age-old dedication once for all, and gave it to some court favourite. From

whom, through manifold changes and chances, it descended, some nine months since, to Robert Bruce, most harmless and most unsuitable Duke on all the roll of peers.

In all his views, Fate, the mocker, had arranged for the survival of the most unfit. His third cousin, who immediately preceded him, had been brought up with the fear of the dukedom ever before his eyes. Somewhat cranky, more than rather vicious, the last duke but one was yet in most respects a duke, accustomed to the manners of his time and the customs of his position. Such as he and his forbears had lived ducally on the fat of the land, no matter who went empty away; reigning over Norfolk Northwyk, Barr in Yorkshire, Dunlo in Perth, and Eagre in the Isle of Wight, with firm, if somewhat ruthless, hands.

To the long and not inglorious line of dead succeeded the Bruce, short of stature, weak of eye, with his bundle of prejudices on his back and something not far off a maggot in his brain. And that brain span with the overwhelming duty owed to Northwyk, Barr, Dunlo, Eagre, and the rest of the goods the gods had given him. His duty lay in the land that he inherited, which perhaps was the reason he fixed his wandering eyes on the distant stars, and was so immediately occupied in the creation of a new heaven and new earth.

With the help of two private secretaries he made out, groaningly, his rule of life, dividing the year with as much care as if he were an astrologer, and apportioning to each estate his tithe of time. He badly wanted help, and the two well-bred, well-educated boys did their conscientious best to help him. They were firm with him about charities, severe about his social duties, and wrote long letters to their various relations for hints on his

behalf. Young prejudices and old convictions were ill agreed.

"You want me to spend so much time seeing people I don't want to see," the Duke said plaintively, when they instructed his man to clean him up, and ordered his carriage for him. "I like to see people of my own choosing, not because I must." And it had no effect when they explained his duty as the biggest man in his part of the county, and the etiquette—borrowed from their mothers—of returning calls. He said the one was "dross" and the other "waste of time," and rubbed his fat little hands whenever he managed to escape.

With those whose acquaintance he made grudgingly, he soon boiled in the hottest of hot water. To them he explained his views on the sanctity of life—brute life—as the simple sportsmen called it in those parts, for there were superfine shots and hard riders for neighbours to Northwyk. Even if he were too blind to shoot, and quite too unwieldy to ride for any more excitement than for liver exercise, still neighbourly love should prevail, and draw in hunt subscriptions for his neighbours'good. Instead of which he preserved not at all, but scrupulously wired his fences; arguing, with some semblance of logic, that the land was his and the fulness thereof, and withal the right to do as he pleased in his own place.

And it appeared to the neighbourhood that his pleasures were as odd as they were few. Kings, princes and governors showed no disposition to visit Northwyk as they did in days of old; other times and distinctly other manners had arrived.

"The feller only eats porridge," said old Lord Trimingham to his son, as he ate rather more than was good for his digestion in view of an early visit to Homburg.

Mrs. Stone confided in Lady Rebecca that she feared the new Duke was given to strange notions for one of his rank. She knew so well the proper ways of dukes. The late Duke would have been ducal had he lived; the one before had been quite ducal, though not quite circumspect in his manners. The Vicarage of Norton sat at his feet, the vicar was his chaplain; it would have been odd if she had not known his customs, some of them, at any rate—those which might be published in his obituary, not those sighed over at the other end of Great Britain by his duchess, nor those discussed to the accompaniment of pints and half-pints at the "Northwyk Arms."

"Of course, he has a certain way with him," Mrs. Stone said pensively. She was often pensive when she thought of dukes, their responsibilities were so astounding; she longed to share the burden with them. "He seems bent on antiquarian research," she added, "instead of seeing the vast opportunities open to him in these sad days."

"That may come," Lady Rebecca said briskly, and cast an eye ahead on her own account. "Dear me! what a quantity of flannel shirts we have this time!" In the intervals of charitable discourse the two women counted up the year's work of a missionary guild.

"Too many," sighed Mrs. Stone. "Do you think they can possibly wear them in such a climate?"

"Two, four, six—yes, six dozen pairs of stockings," counted Lady Rebecca. "By the way, is it a fact, do you know—I never listen to gossip—that the Duke is digging up that queer old shut-in garden, where poor Duke Edward buried his dogs?"

"I believe it to be true. There are a great number of men in work just now, and they are employed at the Castle."

"Do you know what they are doing?"

"I heard a rumour, but I hardly believe it, so you will take it for what it is worth, won't you? I heard he intended to restore the worship of the ancient Druids, or the ancient Romans; it's all the same."

"Incredible," said Lady Rebecca, with her hands full of grey flannel. Mrs. Stone was silent. She believed all evil of everyone; not even dukes were exempt.

"But how can he dream of anything so foolish?" said Lady Rebecca with vivacity. "No one knows nowadays what the ceremonies were, do they? And I never saw a scrap of mistletoe in the Castle garden that I can remember."

"Why else should he clean out the wells?" asked Mrs. Stone, leaning heavily on the worst interpretation.

"S. Eustochium," faltered Lady Rebecca, whose proclivities differed from those of her father. Mrs. Stone looked more severe than before.

"The alternative is as bad—or worse," she said, "Think of the dreadful days when the credulous world went on pilgrimage to Walsingham. Could we wish for a recurrence of such times?"

"It's strange how keen people are on superstitions nowadays," Lady Rebecca answered, and wondered if the old tales held any truth, also, whether virtue remained in the wishing-well at Northwyk. She thought she would like to try it, even breathed a wish. "He seems wrapped up in the place," she added, "which is quaint, isn't it? when one remembers what a distant connection he was."

"Ah! the ways of Providence are past finding out," said Mrs. Stone, with the air of one who has been privileged beyond lesser mortals in their interpretation.

"One likes it of him," said Lady Rebecca, with some decision.

"Oh, one likes it of him," echoed Mrs. Stone, and carried off the topic with the missionary garments to their special cupboard.

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For it was to Northwyk, flat, fen-bound Northwyk, that the Duke's love was given. Barr and Dunlo were incidents—somewhat gorgeous and expensive incidents—of his chequered life; but liaisons, not true love. And it was not because it was the first-held land of his forbears, the place from which he took his title, but because of the mysterious sanctity which had enwrapped it from all ages. He dated its virtue from pre-Christian days, including in his *acta sanctorum* the miracles wrought by Freya, as well as by Eustochium, the sacrifices paid to Dis as well as the offerings made to Sexburga. "Christianity," he told an interested and archæological bishop, "but handed on the same great tradition of the ground. Other times, other manners," he said with a beaming disregard of his audience, and enumerated the blood-covenants of Dis with as great a reverence as he touched on the "two cloths of gold, enwrought with coarse pearles," which had decorated the shrine of Eustochium.

The tale went the round of Norfolk, and was mangled in the telling. Mrs. Stone's version was the one that found most favour. Evidently the Duke, fresh from heathen India—all creeds being caught in the sweep of their nets—desired to

restore Paganism, blood covenants and all. Rumour had it that he had asked the bishop, worthy man, to sacrifice a black cock at midnight, and help in the consecration service with the first streak of dawn.

The well was cleansed, and once again the holy water bubbled up through the chalk; once again the gardens of Venilia welcomed her worshippers to their waving wind-flowers and grassy walks; once again Freya scattered her dews on the lawn, and once again dark Dis beckoned from the shadows of his stunted oak-trees.

The Duke looked on his work and saw that it was good. Much labour for the genuine unemployed workman, other than he who goes singing his sorrows in strange townships; honest wage for fair work, and, above all, he was his own overseer, and the men knew it. The matter was too sacred to be overseen by hirelings. His own incapable hands did some of the work, and the men put it right in his absence.

Crank as he was, innocent as he was, in the old phrase, the Duke knew his men and valued them, not as machines, but as potential angels, who needed only the touch of God's finger to make them fly.

And from his childish enthusiasm, and the sincerity of his clear soul, even the laziest learned something of the real dignity of work; the pride in doing one's best because it is in one to do it; self-manifestation, self-justification, in the highest sense. And, learning this, who knows whether they drew not a foot or two nearer to that angelhood in which the innocent Duke believed with such unalterable belief?

"Make me worthy of the soil," was his prayer when by a series of seeming accidents he inherited

the land. And in pursuit of his ideal he was conscientious, true and just, as far as he knew, in all his dealings, and one of the greatest plagues ever invented by Nature for the bewilderment of hard-pressed agents or the agitation of a parish priest.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was the Duke's habit to tell over daily the manifold blessings of his lot in life, lest he should overlook them under his bushel of responsibilities. High up in the list came the near neighbourhood of Dr. Drury. To him he could pour out himself, surer of an understanding ear in the man who had known him obscure and poor, than in the rather superior boys whose business it was to help him on his affluent way. He distrusted all paid service; above all, distrusted the knowledge of those boys of the things done, as a matter of course, by those born to dukedoms, who have not in their riper, less malleable age had dukedoms thrust upon them to their mortal fear. It made him self-conscious when they ringed him round with the dignity of his position, and, as he knew, granted him none for himself.

And the neighbourhood of his own kind, young and old, laughed at him, and he knew it and resented it. He felt he was not accepted for himself, but tolerated for his position; and, feeling it, shut himself up more and more with the vague mysticism that guided his life, and the great work he had in mind for the conversion of his country.

The work was on the holy places of Great Britain, and for it the secretaries compiled misleading notes from the dusty volumes in the library; thereby

greatly annoying the librarian, who had been accustomed to have the place to himself for the last six-and-twenty years. The sheaves of notes dealing with cromlechs, cairns, barrows and doom-rings were supplemented by elaborate descriptions of shrines, healing wells, and inventories of relics. "Item, a rib of the blessed S. Oswald, with one tooth of the same," and conjectures as to their present place of sepulture.

The Duke found Dr. Drury a sympathizing critic, one whose knowledge of the subject was conveniently extensive, and by whose help the grosser inaccuracies were deleted from the pages of his book.

A little leaven, thought the Duke, as he checked off believingly the five-and-thirty chefs credited to S. Awstin, to leaven the lump of British irreverence for things of fair report; something to impress the eye, and through it the memory. Something to help to bring back the forgotten sense of holy ground, and with it, perhaps, some lost faith in higher powers than the brain of man, so busy in seeking out many more inventions than that brain can grasp.

He looked out of the window, suddenly forgetful of everything save the invisible cloud of witnesses that companioned him. In the long moorland view he saw a vision of regenerate and evolved tenantry, treading the blessed fields with grass-shod feet, clothed in fair linen, and eating the herbs of the field with thankful hearts. And while his eyes were filled with the beatific vision, his well-filled pen dragged its inky course over the clean copy of his book.

Later, he held a form of service for the re-dedication of the wells; the bishop was not present, in spite of all rumours which ran about the village. It was a simple local ceremony, and the Duke

conducted it himself, before a mystified congregation of tenantry. The secretaries attended as in duty bound, looking clean, cool, and indifferent, as they stood in the little garden among the rest. The village honoured the ceremony by attending in its "blacks"—garments usually reserved for feasts and funerals, but complimentary to the occasion. It drank Venilia's health in unqualified water from her well, and wondered if she were some mysterious daughter of their unfathomable overlord. For the rest, the feast was sufficiently well spread, the tables full of expensive fruits and vegetables on lordly dishes of silver, where the Duke stood at the head munching a barley roll, and encouraging others to partake of the same nourishment.

The secretaries retired to consume small whiskies and sodas before beginning to criticize the proceedings. One approved of the hymn to Venilia, written for the occasion by his colleague; the author admired nothing, not even the hymn.

The Duke sighed with something like relief when the last of his guests had gone. He turned to Roger Drury, running his fat little hand through his friend's lean arm.

"Have the faithful been too much for you?" asked the doctor drily.

"Not too much; oh, not too much at all," the host responded eagerly, adding, at the same time and in the same voice, his unconscious thanksgiving. "Got that done; good job, too," while he sped his parting guests with a weak eye-shot down the dusky drive.

The doctor stretched himself. "My faith, Bob, but my bones are unaccustomed to these things."

"It's your own fault, infidel that you are." He stopped a moment, considered some far distant prospect, perhaps Honor's light figure among the

flowers and fountains of the Italian garden, perhaps some vision that never was on land or sea; then added: "I should like to reconsecrate Maid's Meadow next."

"In the same company?"

"Of course," said the Duke confidently. "You see how eagerly they took it up? There is more reverence than people know of alive among us; I'm sure of it. You heard Braithwaite's hymn—reverence in rhythm—you see how the thought appealed to him? But I want it to appeal to all sorts and sections of our queer, composite society. I don't want antiquaries only, like you, my dear old man, nor boys like Braithwaite, who know half as much again as I do. We want a wider scope. Think how we could regenerate the ordinary holiday maker! A bag of meal, and water from the brook, a pilgrim staff, and strong shoes, and hey for the joyous wanderer, with his face turned ever towards his Holy Land. Britain would again be the Isle of the Saints, rich in the faith and the reverence that is in her."

"It might appeal to a certain section—don't be angry, Bob—of sentimentalists."

The Duke shook his sager head. "Not to one class, but to all classes," he said emphatically. "Why, only the other morning when Lancaster was shaving me—I don't think I'll ever get used to being shaved, Roger; for nearly forty years I've shaved myself, and it's ill work breaking old habits—well, I mentioned the subject, and Lancaster was so impressed, he slipped the razor and cut my chin. Luckily not my throat," the Duke added thoughtfully; "no, luckily not my throat."

Dr. Drury imagined the pious gratitude of the next of kin. "It was lucky," he agreed; "and how else did Lancaster express appreciation?"

"He thought, and I couldn't make him feel otherwise, that I meant the idea to appeal only to a certain section of society—vile word, vile word!—and not to all men. He said he was satisfied with the amusements provided for him. I think he instanced a ball at Christmas. If I had thought of it, I could have included choric dancing in my service. David danced before the Ark."

"He did," agreed Dr. Drury, and remembered Michal's comments.

"Perhaps it might have appealed to Lancaster," said the Duke thoughtfully. "Do you think it would, Roger?"

"I don't own a valet, I haven't studied the breed."

"Oh, they are interesting, but not individual. I wish I could encourage their individuality," said the Duke. "They agree too quickly, when I feel sure they ought to differ, or would differ on mature consideration."

"There's a great deal of repressed revolution in Englishmen," said Dr. Drury slowly, "which is feeling for expression nowadays."

"Why don't they speak out, man to man?"

"Because just at present we aren't man and man, Bob. One side has something or other to gain, and he gains his ends by hiding or denying his convictions. Outwardly, you can't be man and man with your valet—how could you?"

"But inwardly?" asked the Duke eagerly. "On the astral, Roger, where one's feelings take shape and ripen to action—what then?"

"Perhaps you shave Lancaster," said the doctor, with a laugh; "who knows? Perhaps all the repressed rebellion is concentrating, solidifying, shaping for action, as you say. We shall see. In any case, the tide won't be stayed by turning

bank holidays into days of obligation and pious worship."

The Duke blinked at the violet of the evening sky. Something purposeful lighted for a moment his pale eyes, and firmed his wandering lips. "Who can tell?" he said. "One man rose up and prayed and the plague ceased. Who knows what may happen in this corner of the world where I am set; and where, if I can make one man, woman or child in the place realize his soul, and his duty to his neighbour, I shall have justified my existence. If not, I can die attempting it."

"Poor old martyr," said Dr. Drury, with a little pressure on the arm. "Good luck to your bloodless revolution!"

The Duke picked up a long purple worm, dragging its attenuated length along the grass; he held it for a minute unemotionally in his hand. "Sometimes brotherly love pulls us two ways," he said whimsically; "there's my duty to my brother the bird, who has his family's appetite to provide for, and my duty to my brother the worm, who seems created to satisfy it and yet may have personal objections. Birds are flying flowers: they please the sight and the ear, and yet they are a greedy and unthankful race, bloodthirsty and grasping. Whereas the worm is a peaceful liver, who fertilizes the ground, and is a useful member of society, though not artistic; no, a crawler on his belly all his days. Is it my duty to provide for the birds through his life-blood? Interpret me this thing?"

Dr. Drury laughed. "Oh, I read your parable fast enough, and I won't remind you that nature never intended the worm to walk on legs, which I understand is its immediate intention. Evolution is a miracle-worker, and no doubt, in course of

time, pigs will be feathered folk; I'm merely troubled about the interval."

The Duke put down the worm gently on the grass; it burrowed out of sight with ungrateful haste. "Go in peace, little brother," he said placidly; then turned to the doctor, inspecting stars above the waving trees. "We can't stave off the transition period," he said; "nor would I delay it, if I could, by a single day. Uncomfortable or not, I want justice alike for the birds and the worms."

"Amen," said Dr. Drury; "and as they are natural enemies, you may not do much damage by setting them one against the other."

"Sometimes without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," said the Duke, with the spirit as well as the words of some covenanting ancestor.

"Just so," said the doctor conversationally; "and it's usually innocent blood. It's as well to remember that."

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Meanwhile, Honor explored the Italian garden and watched the vagaries of the gold-fish; saw their square red snouts nosing for flies above the grey water, counted the bubbles they blew in their return dive to the shells and fragile water-weed below; resented the shoulders of a giant bull carp as he cleared a passage for himself by application of the eternal law, thrusting weaker brethren to the wall, and floundering in his efforts to satisfy unconquerable greed.

"You horrid pig!" said Honor at last, provoked beyond endurance, and she picked up a dry stick to frighten it away. Every other fish fled at her well-meant interference. "Silly little things; if

I were you, I'd combine and keep him out," she said, speaking to deaf ears. Then leaned low over the grey water, looking deep into the roots of the waving weeds, and among the fresh-water shells. The fish, distrustful still, hid out of sight. Honor saw only the tiny bubbles on the surface, and the thin waving filaments of weed.

While she watched, her mind floated, as it generally did, at odd moments, to Dominick and his doings up in London. She had a series of fancy pictures to which she could turn at any time, vain imaginings of his work and play. His letters told her he was busy. Honor saw him high up in his little flat honestly employed in improving the shining hour, adding to the value of the nation by original research. She watched him in fancy, his crisp black hair ruffled by straying fingers; saw, as she had seen so many times, the deep marks between his straight eyebrows, as he cudgelled his brain to the pursuance of some one train of thought. Saw, too, the sudden light flash in his eyes over the new-born theory. Honor knew the face too well, perhaps loved it too much, for her heart's peace.

From Dominick, her thoughts turned to the Duke. It was difficult to fit him in with her scheme of things, his background was unsuitable. Honor always saw the forbears in the man, shaped them to other times, made pictures for herself of their adventures. She could not place him, unless it were in some cell in a desert, surrounded by wide spaces for his roving gaze; or, perhaps, among the great moors of the North, with the white-winged mists veiling his inconsistencies. He was full of beautiful thoughts, the thoughts that should be sung by poets, long haired, slim fingered, to the sound of harps; not put in plain English by a landowner who wanted to reduce them to practical

ends. Sometimes Honor wondered if a strange gift had been given her, if she were privileged to see with that queer sight of hers, not the sensible body of the man, but his glorious body, the body of the resurrection in the old phrase. Perhaps it made her see the best side of human nature, surely in itself a gift past price.

She was more interested in the legends of the holy places than curious about his proposals. She thought the service that afternoon rather silly than otherwise. The hymn was good, but needed a choir other than that of small urchins pressed into the service; the idea was beautiful, yet it was difficult to disassociate it from the stumpy little Duke, with his bald head and incoherent manner. She wondered how it would appeal to Dominick, whether the poetry of the conception would outweigh the prose of personality; then was led to analyse the making of personalities, their worth in the furtherance or hindrance of a scheme. She wondered if she could replace the Bruce's present personality by the more heroic grandeur of his past. Then laughed, as she remembered her early struggles to change her own sex, then wondered if the Duke had felt something of the same humiliation in his younger days.

Lastly, she thought of the personality of places, contrasting those she knew with their histories. She was in a place of great peace, where the day wore to its end in gentle shadows, not as in the marshes, dying in an agony of colour amid leaping flames. She told herself perhaps that was the real meaning of a holy place—the power of silence, cessation from haste, a place from which to gather strength for further effort; but, emphatically, not a place to be approached with shawms and trumpets, or even hymns in honour of Venilia.

"What a child it is to sit playing with the fish at this time!" She heard her father's voice, gentle, tolerant of that childhood, as he stopped at her side.

"Maybe you have been scrying in the water?" asked the Duke, dipping a fat forefinger in the basin. "It should be famous for such things; the water flows from the wells, you know."

"I saw nothing but the fish," said Honor, and hid her dreamings from interpretation.

The Duke balanced himself with caution on the rim of the fountain; his feet barely touched the ground; his eyes fixed themselves on Honor with a gentle inquisition. "Have we been rude, your father and I, to leave you like this?" he asked simply. He was a plain old man, not used to girls, dreaming of them as of something far above his humble self.

"Rude? not a bit," said Honor frankly, and gave no hint of her unconsciousness of his absence. "You must have had a lot of things to talk about, too—all that happened this afternoon. Please don't think I was dull."

"I don't think I did think of it till I saw you," said the Duke beamingly, "or I would have told Braithwaite; he would have been so pleased. But I was thinking more about the effect of the service. Wasn't it grand to see the way the people drank it in?"

Above the Duke's head, Dr. Drury's eyebrows arched themselves in disbelief. Honor remembered the subsequent tea-drinking, also the care with which Mrs. Stone isolated herself from the ignoble herd who shared the same hospitality.

"You felt it?" said the Duke.

"Perhaps, in some ways. But I haven't felt the call," said Honor, with a little kindly mockery.

"Didn't you feel the old gods and the new, the gods of the Pagans and the gods of the Christians had met together, and kissed each other with the kiss of peace?" The Duke's eyes glowed at the thought.

"I'm afraid I didn't feel that. I think"—Honor hesitated for a moment—"I felt that the intention was there."

The Duke waved his hand. "Where intention leads, results follow," he said. "I think even Mrs. Stone was impressed."

When Honor disliked anyone she had the rare grace of silence; but her silence was emphatic. Dominick once said she told more by her silence than by her speech.

"But you see the beauty of the plan?" the Duke asked wistfully; "a foretaste of the Millennium, the lion of Paganism lying down with the lamb of Christianity, all creeds fused in one religion, all sects bound together by one act of worship. It would mean the regeneration of the world."

"And all to be accomplished in the space of sixty minutes," said Dr. Drury rather sadly.

"It's a beginning," cried the optimistic Duke. "You have seen the sowing of the seed; we must wait for the gathering of the harvest."

"In the autumn," said Dr. Drury. "And so you weren't impressed, Honor, by the singing, and the incense and the flowers?"

"I wish I could have been, but I'm afraid I'm rather a work-day kind of person."

"Yet," said the Duke very seriously, "I find a kind of gospel grace in you, neither week-day nor Sunday, but the same all the year." In his heart he thought she fulfilled something very close to his ideal; a true "maid" he called her, using the word with the same reverence with which a

Catholic speaks of the Virgin. Honor opened wide eyes, then blushed a little. Personalities, even so innocently spoken, were strange to her ears.

"You've kept up your old habit, Bob, of thinking aloud," said Dr. Drury.

"I say what I think when I think it," answered the Duke.

"And end by scandalising your neighbours. Honor, child, the dew is falling. What kind of foot-gear have you?"

"Quite thick enough for bog-trotting," she assured him, then turned to the Duke. "Do you mind," she said, "if I ask you not to say things like that again? It isn't quite comfy, and I don't know how to answer you, because, you see, I'm not used to compliments." Her honest eyes met his.

"I wouldn't dare to pay you a compliment," said the Duke gravely. "Make your peace with me, my dear. I'm only a rough-turned old man, and my mouth is apt to speak without bit or bridle. I don't think I said anything very outrageous though, did I, Roger?"

Dr. Drury shook his head; his memory took a curve towards old days, when outrageous things had been said by those unconscious lips to the large astonishment of bygone generations. How at his own table Robert Bruce had discussed the ethical aspects of divorce, and the laws which deal with it in divers countries; the alarming flow of erudition, epithets and adjectives which swept the table by storm. Even now he chuckled at the sudden collection of down-drooped eyes, the hasty clearance. Robert Bruce was unchanged; he felt he loved him for it in a world of fluxes. Yet it made him out of place in his new position; his squareness could never fit its angles to the round hole, cushion it as he

might. He wanted to make his own bed in his own way, before lying at ease, and refused ancestral down with fervour.

He put his hand into his pocket, brought out a biscuit, broke it in bits, and crumbled it for the gold-fish. The big brute sulked behind his weedy cover; the Duke pursed up his thin lips and whistled softly, till it peered from the shadow, and darted on its prey, flicked its forked tail contemptuously and vanished again.

"It took me two years to tame him," cried the Duke exultantly. "Then, when I first brought him here, I had nearly all my work to do again. He'd got used to his close little bowl, you see." He stopped again, and crumbled more biscuit thoughtfully. "I wonder if I did right," he said to vacant space. "I'm not sure, I'm not sure. He was happy in his little house; he didn't know anything about fountains. I wonder if I've only made him discontented by trying to improve his conditions. Like me, just like me—act first, and bear the burden of regret later." He threw the rest of the crumbs into the water, and headed for the long belt of shrubbery, quite forgetful of Honor and her father.

"Poor old Bob never said a truer word in his life," observed the doctor. "I wish he understood the sort of millennium he's beckoning, with the best intentions, too; there's the pity of it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

At first Dominick wrote home with astonishing regularity, filling many sheets of official paper, and, in part, accounting for the waste alleged by the nation's mouthpiece in the House of Commons. It was good paper, and his writing looked much better than usual on its fine cream-laid surface. Also, there was satisfaction in using paper with such a heading. It was infinitely more impressive than "15, Dickens Chambers," in a back street in Bloomsbury, which claimed him out of official hours.

15, Dickens Chambers, was up among the chimney-pots of that noble pile. Dominick had a bird's-eye view of the courtyard from his window, could count the soot-flakes falling on the summer geraniums in due season, or admire the vigilance of the custodian and general guardian angel of the flats on duty in his hutch near the entrance. On the floor below him lived a medley of the arts and sciences: a physiological chemist side by side with a man who did black-and-white sketches for weekly papers, a lecturer on bacteriology next door to a conductor of a celebrated lady's band. The musician had a free hand with his piano, and played the Kreutzer Sonata with emphasis. On Dominick's own floor there was peace: a quiet little poet lived opposite, a traveller and mountaineer of some repute kept silence next door.

But for the series of chambermaids, Dominick went without women's society, nor sought to know his neighbours. For the hour his work absorbed him; besides, he wanted to learn how he stood before committing himself. He proceeded cautiously, watching others, and weighing himself in uncomfortable self-consciousness.

He wrote instructive letters to Honor, explaining more of his day's work than of himself. "Seven hours' slavery," he called it in a later letter. From the first, the regulations afflicted him. He had to sit out his seven hours, whatever work there was to do, even if there were none. That was red-tape. He spoke of it as of some monster, a veritable laidly worm. Longed, also to Honor, to be a new slayer of such dragons. The work, to a great extent, was monotonous; that was mismanagement. He saw much room for grievance in the foolish promotion by seniority. Before he had been a month at the Museum he could have told Honor something! Of course, men talked.

Honor would be interested in the specimens enclosed of official language. Number one explained that a supposed Ogham inscription was a fake, and badly done at that; number two referred the interested inquirer to another department. Dominick wanted to put, "Try so-and-so," or, in the tongue of the 'bus conductors—was Honor acquainted with the heart of this delightful tribe?—"'igher up." Polysyllables were a weariness to the flesh. Number three accepted in the name of the nation, with provisional caution, the gift of a bronze torque.

It was lucky for him that he understood the difference between the gibne, the torque, and the mind; very few men did, not even all his seniors! One man came a fearful howler the other day. Dominick was very sorry for him, but when a man

didn't know what he was talking about, it was safer to hold his tongue. It was over a question of the *geasa* and *buada* in the "Book of Rights;" an amazingly complicated system Dominick owned, and to which he hoped to turn his attention as soon as he had got the hang of his routine work.

By and by Dominick spoke of other men, casually as of old acquaintances—men who came "home to his digs." at times, and in whose society were discussed other matters than national property, and in other tongues than Governmentese. He sketched these men for Honor's benefit; men, as he put it, of like passions with himself, who were troubled with the same kind of chiefs, much the same kind of monotony. They called Dominick essentially Celtic. Dominick accepted the compliment; he grew almost oppressively Irish in his enthusiasm.

Fielding and he were often together. Fielding had a large command of polysyllables by nature, and was therefore useful at the present time. He spoke of their "annual increments" with an air unobtainable by other mouths. But, then, his father was a Treasury Clerk; did Honor think the gift of tongues hereditary?

Later on he made allusion to a girl he knew, sister to one of the men in the Egyptian Antiquities. Rather like a mummy herself, but as clever at chalk or charcoal as she could stick. She drew on students' days in the Greek and Roman rooms; she had asked him to tea at her flat, and showed him the head of Antinous. Later, had asked him to sit to her as Jason. She said his head was Greek, though he believed it Celtic; in any case, it was better than retaining Firbolg characteristics, wasn't it? He meant to oblige the lady if he could spare time.

Then he was fired with ideas for original work: he tackled the astronomical significance of the Irish gods. Clearly, Cuchullin was a sun-myth, and he thought he saw his way to explain the "debility of the Ultonians"—a much-debated point—by this means. Already he had made sheaves of notes on the subject, from various authorities, and traced some fifty parallels, beginning with Diodorus and Strabo, passing, through Max Muller, Starcke and Tylor, to Ellis and Jevons and the rest of the explorers. What did Honor think of that for industry? He asked her about her own work interestedly, in the tone of an older and wiser brother; regretted he could not give her much help nowadays, but she would remember that his time was not his own. Later, claims prevented so much letter work. He called it work, Honor noticed, though he owned a fluent pen.

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He was through three months of his trial year before Dr. Drury and Honor paid him a visit. Their first duty was to the Museum, standing dim and smokily vague under a light mist. Dominick explained and demonstrated to his heart's content and Honor's edification, while Dr. Drury interviewed his chief, an old personal friend.

Then he gave a small party in the flat in their honour. Miss Jaikes and her brother from the Egyptian Antiquities were asked, had accepted and arrived. Dominick supposed a man's eye had overseen her dress for this occasion. He had begun to notice women's dress, and felt certain qualms respecting Honor's. He wished she cared more for her clothes. He had altered his own cut of garments, quite possibly had begun to study his appearance, and found a modern Jason ill-suited

to a top-hat. Most of the men at the Museum wore blue serge suits, and something soft in felt on their heads. Dominick adopted a chastened tone of grey, which, under the genial influence of London smoke, promised to ripen speedily to the more usual black of his colleagues' headgear. He began to know what suited him, and thanked Miss Jaikes for opening his eyes.

He welcomed the party to his flat; pointed out to Honor the luxury implied by his knocker, of the sanctuary order; displayed his room with pride, almost ostentatiously the room of a student, with its severe brown paper, well-filled bookshelves, and austere avoidance of decoration. He installed Honor in the wicker chair; gave Miss Jaikes and Dr. Drury the little sofa; accommodated Jaikes with an oak chest, and took the creepie-stool himself. It was a great feast.

Dominick poured out the tea, and called on all and sundry to admire his table furnishments. "Am I not consistent?" he said, and shook the over-fragile Belleek teapot till its painted shamrocks quaked. "Ireland for ever," he cried, "for it got me my job."

"Is that why you are so systematically Irish, Mr. Blake?" asked his guest, while Honor admired the teapot without comment.

"Now, if he's a true 'Eireannac,' he will give us all the sorrows of his race," said Jaikes. "Was he ever thus from childhood's hour, Miss Drury?"

"I think he must have learnt loyalty in London," Honor said. Afterwards wished she had not, with a new self-consciousness, caught from Dominick, perhaps. She felt as though she reminded him of loyalty to Bullen's Farm.

Miss Jaikes sized up Dominick with a measuring glance. "I always say you are more Greek than

Celt," she said, with great assurance. "I can't think of you as Dermid; you wait till Jason is finished, then you'll see."

"Miss Jaikes is a great fortune-teller," said Dominick, with a laugh. "She seems innocently eating her tea—Norfolk butter, Honor—but, in reality, she is planning all our futures as they should be, if Fate is really just."

"Fate's a jade," said Jaikes, "and justice is far from her. All she enjoys is upsetting pre-conceived ideas."

"At present she has laid my lines in fairly decent places," said Dominick. "So I drink to her closer acquaintance." His eyes met Honor's, as he set his teacup on the table. In each was the light of memory. "I like that dodge of libation, Honor—there, we're safe now, if they thought of harming us." And again in Dominick's ears sounded the distant murmur of the sea.

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That night Honor and Dominick and Dr. Drury went to the theatre. The play was *Lear*, the staging magnificent, most of the women beautiful. In the intervals, Dominick explained to Honor some of its symbolism, taking as his text the nature element, and steering clear of ordinary emotion. But Honor loved rather to think of it as human tragedy than as the symbolization of nature forces working to their doom. It said more to her heart, and less to her head, than it did to Dominick. He felt more than ever what an ordinary girl she was. And he wondered why she had such "seeing" eyes, when they saw only such a little way ahead.

The house was full, and from their places in the front row of the dress-circle Honor and Dominick had a fine view of everyone. Already Dominick

had learnt to hide too great a display of eagerness; it was left to Honor to admire and remark on the surroundings. None the less, his eyes followed hers in their slow circuit of the house, saw them rest automatically for a moment on a figure in a box. Saw, too, the look of recognition lighten her face, the sudden smile on her lips, the little forward movement. Saw, too, the woman in the box. It was Mary!

Dominick's face burned; he wondered what to do—at first, how to hide himself from Mary's eyes, next, how to brazen it out before her. It seemed to him as if he were the offender. She looked magnificent sitting there, quite at her ease. The curtain rose before his mind was made up what to do. He looked no longer at the stage, but at Mary, watching every movement, each fleeting change of expression on her changeful face. Even Dr. Drury saw she was no less beautiful; only a woman could do justice to her dress. Whosoever designed it had a master hand, and a large appreciation of his subject. Like Mary, it was unique: a thing of soft blues and tender greens, with hints of deeper tones, wrapped round her so that the notion of "fitting," common pins, prosaic stitches, seemed incredible. The dress was part of Mary, even as the uncut stones, rough turquoise, amethyst and emerald seemed like phases of her character.

Dominick eyed Honor's white dress, only too evidently fitted, a thing run up without discretion by the machine of a village dressmaker. It might not spoil the fine lines of Honor's slender figure, but it did its successful utmost to disguise them. Dominick felt contemptuous, such provincialism insulted him. Dr. Drury's dress-suit was old-fashioned; it was a pity, he thought, that clever men took such small heed to outward adornments,

If Dr. Drury's body mirrored his soul, that soul was very much unkempt. Mary looked like a queen.

"The painter-man designed that gown," thought Dr. Drury. Nothing was visible of the man behind the curtain of the box. They left, during the interval, to Dominick's helpless rage. Their absence filled his mind, shutting out all other sights, all other speculations. Both Honor and Dr. Drury understood and respected his silence.

Dominick had imagined Mary under many circumstances, in many conditions—even, with a thrill of horror, starving; but never content, never so obviously satisfied with her position, never recognizing with such composure her right to the looks, the theories, the questions of the world. He had thought of her in hiding, living a life of poetic love, just as he felt his own prodigality of emotion might prompt himself to do—a strange life, a secret life, full of uncertain, changeful charm. And he thought of Murray as a worshipper, hardly ever off his knees for the beauty of the thing that she had done. And Mary, in a coat of astounding gorgeousness, had swept out of the box with the air of a queen—not in the pride of her love—Dominick saw that clearly—but in the pride of her body and the worship of herself.

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Next day was students' day at the Museum, and Dominick found his way to the popular Discobolos, where Emma Jaikes set up her easel with accustomed hand. She looked more withered than ever amid the grand muscles and rounded limbs of Greece. He watched her handle her charcoal freely, with a rhythmic certainty of touch, and felt for the moment as if he assisted at

a ritual. She stopped to flick the outline with a duster.

"Coming to admire my work, Mr. Blake? Nothing doing up above-stairs?"

"Well, it's always interesting to watch you," he conceded. "I like that round-arm way you have of using charcoal. It looks as though you were bowling."

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. You know what a poor provincial person I am—don't you?—so it won't upset you from that very high stool if I give you proof of my ignorance. Hold tight!" He fingered her bread spirals, her paper stumps, her cardboard box of charcoal, as if to give her time for preparation, really to give himself time to put his question with indifference. "If one wants to find an artist's address, where does one look?"

Miss Jaikes tied a knot in her duster, and made it bow solemnly. "It depends if he exhibits anywhere," she said.

"Of course, I mean a painter who exhibits," Dominick answered, with impatience.

"Then you search with diligence through the catalogues of those exhibitions, and 'acts according.' If he's an R.A., you will meet him in big type, often exceeding his deserts; if he's an outsider, you may find him, or you mayn't, according to the will of the 'Forty Thieves.' That's to say, at the Academy, where you'd better start your quest."

"That's at Burlington House, Piccadilly, isn't it?"

"Even so; and when you're there, just look out for my little thing in the water-colour room—an old garden, number one thousand and eighty; don't forget." Dominick's respect for Miss Jaikes went

up by leaps and bounds. "And don't waste my time any longer, please," she added. "I'm not a Government Official, you know. I'm here to work, and not to talk," and she went on with her Discobolos.

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An omnibus took Dominick from Bloomsbury to Piccadilly. Already he had lost the sense of wonder at the unending streets, the ceaseless procession of eager faces. No longer he invented histories about each person, or speculated on the legends which made the spirit of each street. Crowds affected him no longer; he looked indifferently on the dirty floor, instead of eagerly out of the window. His curiosity was not less keen, but for the moment Mary filled both heart and mind to the exclusion of all else.

He had scarcely any eyes for the pictures, little else than a racking headache after the first hour. He possessed himself of a catalogue, and sat down in the half-empty sculpture gallery. The calm of the white figures soothed him, the distant movement of crowds passing and repassing through the turn-stiles seemed like shadows playing on the walls. He laid his hat beside him on the seat and opened his book. It took short time to run down the list of Ms; Murray's name, and three separate numbers, met him in small type. He turned up the figures in the body of the book. "Evensong at Marseilles"—that brought no memory of Mary; "The Goddess of the Vine"—Dominick instinctively wondered in what nomenclature and which mythology; "A Study in Sand"—that truly might be Norton, but, equally, it might be Sahara.

He dragged himself up wearily, and made the

round of the rooms. A desert greeted him, painted as Murray alone could paint it, hot, incredibly dry, with blue shadows; not the desert which blossoms like the rose. He ran his tongue instinctively over his dry lips as he left it. His throat felt full of sand.

Next came a broad study of a Gascon peasant woman, standing waist-deep in the red and yellow vines. The last picture was sheer realism. Dominick felt as though he smelt the tainted streets and saw the gaudy cosmopolitan crowd filling the sidewalks, serving each his special vicious god. An "evensong" indeed, but nothing spoke of Mary; he was glad of that.

Then he left the Academy, quite forgetful of number one thousand and eighty, and the "Old Garden," painted by Miss Jaikes.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CAB took him to Chelsea, a district of which he knew nothing, save from indefinite memories of Sir Thomas More, Turner and Carlyle; the kind of place he felt he must study some day, and for which obliging fate now provided him with his first opportunity.

He dismissed his cab at the old church, and wandered on with the air of a man of leisure; then looked again at the address he wanted, as if it were not already learned and known. Murray lived in a small street, where the houses looked equal to their surroundings, dark, close, and not too clean. Dominick was blind to congruity; it never occurred to him that Mary's gown and her magnificence would be not only out of place but highly ill-housed therein.

As he went up the flight of shabby steps, he observed that the rusty iron railing was of good design, not that the steps lacked whitewash and the services of a new broom. He rang a bell of the old-fashioned kind, attached to yards of vagrant wire, listened impatiently to footsteps in the passage, heard the door groan on its hinges, and found himself face to face with Murray.

The blood rushed to the roots of his black hair; for the moment he was dumb. Murray looked at him with unrecognizing indifference.

"Were you sent here by anyone?" he asked, and thought what a fine specimen the boy was. "If so, give me the card, and I'll see what I can do."

"My name is Dominick Blake, and you ought to be able to guess why I am here." Dominick's breath came heavily, he felt sick and giddy; angry, too, that the strength of his emotions always produced a physical effect.

Murray caught him under the elbow. "You're too late by five years and three months," he said grimly, and led him indoors.

They went into a glass-roofed room at the end of the passage, overlooking a space of blackened soil and sooty shrubs. Murray pushed him into a chair. Dominick fought desperately for self-possession, for the manner of a strong man in this crisis. Imagination painted every conceivable picture for him in the space of ten seconds. He felt miserably angry at his own poor attitude, miserably anxious to be neither overstrung nor sentimental, eager to meet the man on level terms.

"I owe you any explanation you like to demand," Murray said, after some heavy silence.

Dominick accepted the situation, and hated himself for his lack of initiative. Murray seemed anxious to help him, even to show him his own rights. He had been eager to take the conventional view of the case, and blame the man. He wondered if Murray's anxiety were a species of bluff.

"Do you mean you are no longer together?" he asked, putting the question baldly in his need.

"Just that." Murray said no more.

"But she is in London. I saw her last night at the theatre."

"Quite possibly. I did not mean to imply she had left London."

Dominick turned in his big chair. Suddenly the air felt thick with memories of Mary; it seemed as though he heard the soft rustle of her dress, her light firm footfall on the bare oak floor. He looked round quickly, seeing nothing of the usual studio trappings, painter's properties, and the like; seeing nothing but his sister's wraith, in some strange way thinking her thoughts, even feeling as she felt. "Am I to drag it out of you piecemeal?" he asked angrily. "Can't you say what must be said, and be done?"

In plainest English, yet with scrupulous delicacy, Murray told him all. It amounted to the usual tale. Mary, growing bored with him, weary of certain restrictions, economies, straining after his ideals; disappointed, too, in her ambitions, found consolation with another younger, infinitely richer man. The man was a Jew, with a title acquired at some price along with the estate in Austria. Would marry her but for some legal impediment, Murray seemed sure of that. He implied that the man was besotted with Mary. He seemed to suit Mary just as much as Mary suited him.

Murray detached all personal feeling from his statement, but he made it abundantly clear that the breach of faith was Mary's work. He owed it to himself to say as much; he said it plainly, without rancour or regret. "She was a magnificent woman," he said finally; "and she knew her value to the uttermost farthing."

Dominick got up. "I shall hear what she says," he said, rather threateningly, because the story seemed so true; "and, of course, if the two tales coincide——"

"It's too late in the day for apologies, and I don't think you look for them," said Murray, and caught himself thinking he would have better liked

the boy if he had flown at his throat or indulged in some kind of red-blooded melodrama. Anything but this cultivated acceptance of degradation, such self-conscious philosophy. It shamed Murray for the sake of youth.

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As Dominick walked back along the sunlit Embankment, he detached himself from the situation, looked at it from an outside point of view, and grew amazed at his own dearth of feeling. He ought to have felt such tumultuous indignation, whereas he felt puzzled, analytical and calm.

Curiously, too, all his pity, tepid as it was, touched Murray. Mary had lost nothing; Murray had lost much. He remembered now the difference in the man, not to be accounted for by six years' extra age; saw the stoop in the broad, high shoulders, the lines in the tanned face; saw, too, the shabbiness of the man's careless dress. What had he said? "My day was done, and we both knew it." His day was over, but Mary's day-star was yet rising in her heavens.

Suddenly Dominick realized the force of self in the making of fate; it came on him like a conviction of sin. Power was single-eyed; to attain power a man must know himself, yield himself up to his own making, never turn his eyes from the goal he sought. Dominick lifted up his heart in adoration of strength. He realized intensely, for the moment, as by sight, the procession of power; the indifferent, serene, brutal face above the car which crushed or spared the worshippers. That was, indeed, to be a god. Then his mind swung to pity for himself, for his own nebulous desires, the instability of his convictions. He was not even certain how he ought

to feel with regard to Mary; what would be a fitting state of mind, what a man should feel.

He remembered Dr. Drury's bitter advice, and owned his attempts at interference had not been justified by their results. Yet he had appeased some brotherly scruples by the action, even though he had brought to birth fresh problems for himself. It was evident such matters could not be settled by a word or the waving of a magic wand, as Dominick's impatience supposed possible. The magic seemed to work on Mary's behalf. She was content; then, by Dr. Drury's calculations, her morals were justified. She made her own road, and her journey down it was the procession of a god. Apparently she was strong enough to strangle conscience—an artificial product, which still stung Dominick at odd moments. He was not quite sufficient for himself, yet he felt his insufficiency as a disgrace; even envied Mary for her greater strength; he felt but a pale shadow beside his sister's individuality.

He felt that so many bits of others had gone to his own making: prejudices caught from Dr. Drury, odd fancies borrowed from Honor, phrases and expressions found in books that seemed to serve his need. Nothing of his own, not the least atom on which he could take his stand, and by which he could prove his own identity. He analysed himself to his elements, and found annihilation. Will, desire, emotion, ebbed and flowed like the waves of the sea. A great terror swept him, while he walked along, unseeing where he went or whom he passed. Dominick sought the spaces of his nature for his soul, and it seemed as though his soul had vanished, leaving but a series of sheaths, borrowed from the ages of the world, to mock him in its stead.

With the hideous fascination of fear he probed further. What did he believe? For what conviction, prejudice, or principle would he go gladly to the death? The void answered him: nothing seemed worth while, even as his over-ready memory painted for him the deaths of martyrs, Christian and Pagan alike, for the glory of the faith that was in them, their assurance in themselves. Their stronger personalities danced phantom-wise before him down the level road of life, their grave clothes mocked his weakness, their convictions his vague dreams. Mary began to assume gigantic proportions in his eyes. A woman had found all herself, while he—and again he felt himself as sea-drift on an ocean of illusion.

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Meanwhile Murray went back to his easel, doing poor work in his struggle to escape his thoughts. Mary haunted him, and he had believed her exorcised by her own act. Unwillingly he let his mind drift on the memory of the past, on the few short months which had shown them their mutual unsuitability. "Yet I never did such good work as when we were together," he said, and painted savagely. He remembered the long journey through the clear September night, the hurried purchases and preparations, the petty details of the night-run from Paris to Bordeaux. Remembered, too, that at last he had found her fitting background in the sunshine of Provence. The names of wayside stations rang in his ears like the names of strange old instruments, breathing music in themselves as much as any cithern or citole. Lusignan, Bazières, Avignon—the long sweet music of their syllables; Tarascon, with its dragon, its

tale of love and righted wrong; all the wild fancies of the South companioned them; no wonder France was the land of the troubadours, of chivalry and song. Realized that love touched them both, among the olives and the vines; saw, as in a flash, each detail, photographically minute; then the breadth of gorgeous colour, wave on wave, before his sight.

Ochre ground, blue shadows, silver grey of the twisted olive yards, silver-grey aspens, fluttering like radiant winged beings in the soft blue sky. Stately lines of cypress, adding dignity, like fingers pointing upwards to the blue. Such an infinite blue! Homely little flowers carpeting the way—blue scabious and pink valerian. If they had stayed among the honey and the wine-stained vineyards, would the same tale have been told to Dominick to-day?

He recalled Mary's awakened eagerness, her fresh pleasure in the new country, her odd fancies, half-poetical, and all her own. "I think you can guess what the wine would be like from looking at the leaves," she said one day. He remembered the acre after acre of crimson, acre after acre of yellow vines. And she thought she saw the potentiality of the vintage in their gorgeous colour, the spirit of the vine in the leaves. He told himself t was a parable; with all her luxuriance, what fruitage had Mary brought?

He took an uneasy turn up and down the big glass-roofed room. It was his own cross-grained spirit of austerity, his Scottish longing for the North, that dragged him away from the oleanders and the honey and set him craving for the infinite snows. Switzerland froze Mary, chilled her temperament, turned her emotions cold. He spoke of the wonderful colour, that distant ethereal

frozen-harebell blue; spoke like a fool to deaf ears. Spoke of "virgin blue" to Mary, tried to make her see with his eyes, worship the aloof, the unpaintable, as he did himself. He knew her limitations, why had he tried to drag her up the heights?

He turned over an old portfolio, filled with hints of great things: slender forests clinging to the mountain-side, things of mist-filmed umber, orange, violet and red; a broken stretch of chartreuse-green water, incredibly transparent, chequered with white foam. Then the snow mountains, to which his soul swept up in wonder, over which his fingers faltered as if committing sacrilege; blue, the purest crystalline blue, like frozen water, against a less ethereal sky. "Inhuman," Mary called them loudly, when he spoke of them with the hushed voice of reverence. "They could have no feelings, sitting up there freezing for a thousand years or more." She was glad when she could watch the storm working across the fifty miles of lake and the rain pelting down in long, straight rods from the rolling clouds, blotting out the mountains in a veil of Indian ink. "Wiped out," said Mary thankfully, and added that to look at them gave her the shivers, and made her think of ghosts. And she had not even that grace which is silent at the thing it does not understand.

Every moment of that time was startlingly distinct to Murray, frozen in his memory, and so preserved intact. The rooms they took in the little village of S. Prex, on the edge of the lake, abominably cold, but compensatingly picturesque; he could see it as soon as he closed his eyes; the queer little wooden house, with overhanging eaves, and a pink balcony, whereon swung festoons of pinker onions. The little green-shuttered windows over-

looking a wine cellar; the procession of village life that passed their ill-hung door.

Girls washing vegetables in the iron fountain, piling up their pumpkins and marrows in their blue aprons—delicious touches of colour in the contrast of lemon-yellow against indigo; men hard at work carting manure, or measuring out litres of wine in great hump-backed wooden measures; passing steamers on the lake, crowded with passengers, funnels throwing aloft their inky clouds of smoke. Murray found the time full enough and good enough to look back on with a sigh.

Then the treat, as Mary called it, of a day at Lausanne, and a dinner at the hotel instead of in their own apartment. Mary adorning herself for the festival before a glass eight inches square, and sweeping out of the thirteen-foot room in a wonderful garment, childishly intent on causing a sensation among the people at the hotel; demanding admiration from him, not for herself, but for the clothes she wore; her pathetic desire to make herself other than what she was. Not his beautiful, untameable sea-maiden, but Mary, the smart woman of the world, according to her lights and intuitions.

He remembered it all—days of peace, when Mary lived like the blue lake under autumn sunshine; days of storm, when the deeps of both were troubled as by tempests; rare days of obedience to his wishes, of a quietude that took thought of his working moods.

Then came the blank. First, the advent of Baron Schreimer, whose interest in Murray's pictures raised his hopes, for the little man was a connoisseur with a long, well-filled purse—and funds were low. Mary began by meaning to make a good thing out of him for Murray's sake; she

finished with different intentions. Murray's face whitened as he remembered all the ugly details of the time.

Well, he had whistled her down wind nowadays, forgotten her, till that long, slim boy, with her trick of colouring, and her suppleness of gait, came and pulled up the curtain once again from his sordid little comedy.

CHAPTER XX.

WHILE ducal eyes found in Honor something more than sight-satisfaction, to Dominick she was as the most ordinary of girls. Possibly because she hid her light under several bushels, perhaps because reverence was not given him of the gods, save for scholarship and such-like weightinesses. He had noticed the length of her eyelashes, he appreciated her listening powers. For the rest, she was not to be worshipped as the one and only heaven-maid; she was to stand the fire of criticism, be measured with the measurement, weighed in the scales of other men's opinions. Dominick was in the throes of comparison.

Jaikes found her quite "decent-looking"—the sort of girl that men in the Greek Antiquities should admire. She dressed badly (he used a stronger term) but she had a ripping figure. It wasn't his line, of course, but she would suggest to Fielding or Hubbard something in the train of Diana—Artemis, then, if holy Roman names weren't good enough for him. So far, so good; but Dominick remembered the tastes of Fielding and Hubbard, which lay in the direction of Gaiety stage doors rather than in the woodland shades of Artemis. Knew, too, how far and fast they would fly from the company of her nymphs. Excused them, also, on the ground that familiarity breeds contempt of classic ideals.

For himself, a certain pseudo-Irish goddess had him in a sort of thrall. She was certainly an Irish Venus, with hair of spun gold, and almost overwhelming in quantity; but real gold, for all that. They met at the weekly meetings of the Gaelic League, where they danced solemnly and very badly the grand old Irish dances.

It was three months since their first introduction, when Dominick, the finished Irish scholar, tuned her trembling tongue to the broad vowel sounds and consonantal intricacies of the language he had made his own. He had that grace in him to know and appreciate a promising pupil. But Miss Evadne Smith took more interest in her teacher than in the matter taught, and her great brown eyes were more engaged on the face of her preceptor than on the "*Bíyl an bolla bán*" chalked by him on the black-board for her instruction.

During the dance, in which their steps were lacking, Dominick asked her of her work in life so seriously, that she laughed; unwitting, that to Dominick, through his training, work had to spell itself before play. She told him that she was in a shop, kept by "ladies," she explained, defining her own status by the addition.

She seemed hugely impressed by Dominick's position, inordinately gratified by the attentions of such a learned man. In a word, she was a minx, whose nineteen years of life had been spent in close study of the ways of men; and who had managed by some cantrip sleight to turn that study to more profit to herself than ever Dominick's Greek and Latin, French and Irish made for him. She was gorgeously pretty, not in the least Dianic, and before three months were past had Dominick head and heel beneath her brogues, one size too small, and heeled at least three inches above the

level of ordinary shoes. Dominick thought her feet adorable, and questioned not the torments she endured both night and morning.

In her way, she had a silent heroism; as sharp knives of agony cut her twinkling feet, as ever cut the feet of the little sea-maiden dancing before her prince for her soul's price. Evadne danced before Dominick to-day, danced with her tongue as well as her feet, torturing each, and her poor, shallow little brain into the bargain, to fasten stronger rivets on his infatuation.

He hinted that she was Grainne, Emer, and Deirdre in one, and she burdened her insecure memory with the trinity, meaning to look out their significance in some idle hour. To this day, the intimacy of the meaning escapes her; she remembers but the compliment. And Dominick felt her company some strange balm; at first, a merely masculine pleasure in a pretty woman's admiration; later, felt it as a thing apart, sanctified for him alone. Later still, compared Evadne with Honor, weighing them impartially in his mind. He decided that Evadne "understood a man," which most undoubtedly she did, and yielded to this gracious, wholly earthly goddess the allegiance of his vanity which he took to be his heart. It was a fine case of calf-love, and a tamer animal never went more willingly to the slaughter of his saner instincts. She heard all about Honor after the first few weeks, and pondered over its significance; the hint of rivalry spurred her on. Never was she more charming than on the day Dominick spoke of Honor's good-fellowship with him.

That night, high up in his flat, Dominick took the ghost portrait of Honor from its place upon the chimney-piece, looking at the dim, etherealized face, the simple folds of hair, the straight gaze of

the eyes, comparing them feature by feature with the milk and roses, the gold and the honey of Evadne's complexion, elaboration of hair, and hardly less elaborately modest eyes. She had such adorable ways of questioning, pretty tricks of speech, childish mispronunciations that dropped like pearls from her mouth. She knew the right way, he told himself stoutly in hours of doubt and self-questioning, notably when he lay awake, watching the round moon steer her course among the chimney-pots. It was just a pretty way, one of her many pretty ways. It was astonishing how many petty vulgarities she hid under her long, black eyelashes, covered with her golden hair, atoned for with her supple, rounded movements, set apart from her with the curve of her red lips. Dominick hesitated, with Honor's portrait in his hand. Then the vision of Evadne passed before his eyes, and he deposed Honor from her place on the narrow shelf and dropped her into the drawer of odds and ends, where she kept company with crumpled bills, bits of string, and an assortment of labels. After which act of homage, he gave himself up to the luxury of dreams; playing with Evadne various and brilliant parts, to the unbridled admiration of the world. The beautiful sphinx presented herself as the riddle most worthy of his solution; and after profound study, Dominick felt as if the *buada* and *geasa* of the "Book of Rights" were as child's play compared with his own puzzling privileges and restrictions.

Sometimes she seemed to Dominick—yet smelling of his native green pastures—as something almost superhumanly refined. Emma Jaikes had been alone to his flat in quest of innocent refreshment; Miss Evadne Smith had been cold and haughty for more than an hour at such a suggestion. Yet,

within himself, almost unknown to himself, he felt able to say things, suggest things to Evadne, which it would have been worse than idiotcy to whisper to Miss Jaikes. Of course, Evadne Smith understood where Emma Jaikes saw nothing beyond the reach of her mahl-stick. It all came to that. Of course, too, in regard to unchaperoned visits, Evadne knew more of the ways of society than Emma Jaikes, and he thought himself rightly rebuked for his presumption, without remembering that Emma Jaikes never let him pay so much as a 'bus fare for her, while the shy Evadne accepted tribute of a heavier kind. Evadne "Couldn't go up to a gentleman's rooms;" and in answer to his eager "Why not?" had only eloquent blushes for answer, where Emma Jaikes marched up, dumped down her canvas unconcernedly, asked for tea, and drank it with a thankful disregard of etiquette.

Also, Emma Jaikes said bluntly, "She wasn't going to be treated even to the tune of twopence," and made him feel abashed and uncomfortable when she forced him to take sundry coppers from her ungloved hand. On the contrary, Evadne was so innocent in her longing for trifles she saw in shop windows, that he rarely counted up the price of his pleasure in her society, nor realized that his £300 a year would but scantly supply her many wants. Instead, he rejoiced in the quick up-rush of colour in her pretty oval face, in the light that danced in her big brown eyes like the glimmer of starlight in some Irish tarn.

She was wholly satisfying to the senses he knew of nowadays, and, incidentally, she taught him how to play. Dominick had never been a play-boy; his great danger, as Dr. Drury said, was that he took himself too seriously; but perhaps the up-

heaval in his education was over-quick, the naturally serious boy becomes boisterous when he first breaks bounds. He did not neglect his work, he simply put no heart into it, and his chief noticed the difference.

"You made the pace too hot at first," he told the boy, something ashamed of straying thoughts and unsuspected inaccuracies. "Go slow for a time; you've been overdoing it." So, in all graciousness, spoke the mighty chief, in ungovernmental language, snatching a moment from his own work to measure his subordinate. Dominick was scarcely grateful, feeling suspicious just because he knew his own backsliding. Other men, juniors like himself, advised him to "go sick" as well as slow; but he brazened out the matter, as much to his clamorous conscience as to the kindly inquisition of his colleagues. Dominick's work was his conscience.

"London isn't going to suit the child," said Miss Jaikes, as in the intervals of twilight she made necessary repairs to fraternal garments. "He's thinner by a stone than he was last year, and growing, too. Those slave-drivers will be too much for him; he should have stayed among the beeves of Norfolk."

"Only Blake drives Blake," her brother answered; "he's an awfully ambitious chap. Hubbard has been mentioned in the *Daily Wailer* as the inventor, or something, of a new reading of a passage in Porphyrius—'De Antro Nympharum'—a fascinating work, no doubt, not studied as it should be. Naturally Blake must out-do him. I bet he's translating Bran into symphonious English verse, with a different reading, notes, and interpretation from Kuno Meyer and Alfred Nutt. No one will read him; but that's a trifle. That it has

been rather sufficiently over-done already is another. Bless your stars, Emma, your brother is original, at least, in his small appetite for research in any field. Chuck us 'T. P.' if you've done with it; I want to see his latest chestnut."

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It was quite true. No one but Dominick drove Dominick, though sometimes he felt as though stung by Io's gad-fly to the performance of impossible ideals; partly to assuage his thirst, partly to fit him for the blessings of his Irish goddess. He admired Miss Evadne Smith enormously, but in a respectful manner, which she did not understand. His innocent propositions sounded more improper than Arcadian in her modest ears. She had as keen a nose for impropriety as Mrs. Stone herself, though the kinship of mind escaped Dominick.

But Evadne felt flattered by his importunity. Among her set it was the thing to have importunate lovers; and her descriptions of heroic resistance outdid anything poor Pamela achieved before her tested virtue was rewarded. Evadne frequently talked of her innocence, yet prided herself on her Zeit-geist, and found no difficulty in reconciling the two extremes. She was nothing if not up to date, but she believed she was acting some new part, telling new stories to ignorant ears; in fact, that since the days of Eve—bad manager that she was—no attractive young woman had ever been quite so persecuted as her dainty self.

She remembered every compliment ever paid her, repeated them to envious and plainer listeners, smiled over them by day, and dreamed by night, italicising each clumsy speech, transplanting it to older, more accustomed lips; for Dominick was not the only beau tied to her apron-strings. Dominick

was very well, but his boyhood, even his innocence, stood in his light. She admired him, liked him to love her even; but had no thought of sighing in return. She divided her heart between two older and more eligible men.

Her real affections were set on a Captain in the H.A.C., tall and fair, who stockbroked for his living, and volunteered for patriotism and pleasure. His angel's visits with his sister to the shop set Evadne's heart fluttering more than any of Dominick's unconventional suggestions. She hardly liked to display the tiny frocks and socks and pinafores before the captain's eye-glass; the shop was one for children's clothing, and their outfit seemed suggestively indelicate to Evadne's mind. But Captain Silver had no such modest scruples; he accepted nephews and nieces undisturbed, they were a common occurrence. He also admired the pretty shop-girl and her "devil's colouring," and managed to make her acquaintance with propriety and a view to amusement. The instinct which was her birth-gift kept Evadne sufficiently unsure of Captain Silver's habits to make her ordinarily careful. Thus far—a step or two further than Dominick's limit—he was allowed, but no farther. Her ambitions were different from Mary's; she did not think of herself as one of the tribe of Phryne; her riches must be accompanied by a wedding ring of the right metal. Evadne was a highly respectable young person, with as keen a knowledge of her value as ever Mary had.

For this cause she kept next on the register of her heart a successful mining engineer, assiduously attentive on occasion, but usually in Cornwall. Evadne distrusted the distance, while she kept him in mind. Other men came, saw, flattered, and went of their own free will, or by her own dismissal;

but Rudd, the engineer, was apparently the same from week-end to week-end. If Captain Silver meant nothing, and she was half-afraid she saw the end of his intentions, there remained to her Peter Rudd. In the meantime, she amused herself with Dominick.

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Dominick racked his brains for something he might do without offence. Evadne was so modest; so many things were offensive to her, that it was like treading on the egg-shells of tradition to offer a suggestion. Dominick learnt to his sorrow and amazement how many are the things a "lady" may not do.

"What do you do on Saturdays, as a rule?" he said, as he squired her to her 'bus after a league meeting. The crowded streets made him feel comfortably chaperoned, yet delightfully alone with her.

"What do you suppose I do?" asked Evadne coquettishly, thinking of occasional sets of tennis in Battersea Park. "I wonder what makes you so curious. Fellows shouldn't be curious; it's not the thing." She remembered one blissful Saturday, and the rush to Richmond in the stockbroking Panhard; the subsequent fines in the police-court for exceeding the speed limit, where she had not been called for prosecution or defence.

"I wondered if you'd come out some Saturday," said Dominick, with proper humility. "Miss Jaikes would come," caution added, as he watched a haughty up-lift in the eyebrows of his divinity.

"Miss Jaikes?" she repeated, with some disdain. "I don't know her, do I? Is she quite the kind of girl who would be my style?"

"She's a good sort," Dominick affirmed. "I

thought you'd like it better than going with me alone."

"Well, I couldn't very well do that, could I?" She paused with a provocative smile. "I haven't said I'll go anywhere—yet. Where did you think of going?"

"I wanted to go to Hampton Court," said Dominick, lighting on that historic pile as the first place he remembered a reasonable distance from town.

"Hampton Court! Better say Greenwich at once, or the Zoo, or the Tower of London!" She remembered, with a pang, the discretion which forbade a far more delightful jaunt to Brighton in Captain Silver's company. Memory jeered at Dominick's lack of enterprise.

"Oh, you've been to Hampton Court, of course," said Dominick; "but, you see, I'm new to these things. I've never been."

"Well, I wouldn't say so, at any rate," retorted Evadne, ashamed and disgraced by his provincialism.

"But it happens to be the truth, you see," said Dominick, a little nettled too. She saw it; she was as keen as a knife where feelings were concerned; the boy's sulky, handsome profile was tilted in the air.

"I expect you know it in-and-out a thousand times better than I do," she said coaxingly. "You see, anyone clever like you gets the history of it all from books."

Dominick inclined a mollified ear.

"If we went," she said, with a little emphasis on the word, "you'd only laugh because I didn't know who painted all the pictures."

"Would you laugh at me because I didn't know my way about?"

It was just what she always did, and in a wider sense than he intended; but she crept a little closer to him, stroking down his irritation. Her feet hurt her inordinately, burnt in the fire of tight shoes and vigorous dancing. But interest demanded that she should soften Dominick. Real tears stood in her eyes; the pain in her feet was unbearable. "That's not kind of you," she said tremulously; "as if I could ever laugh at you!"

Dominick's heart thrilled with a wonderful sense of triumph. He heard the tremolo, stooped and saw the tears on her eyelashes; his pride was heightened by his embarrassment. She blinked the tears away.

"I say," he whispered, with averted face, "don't do that. What's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Evadne, and stood on one foot to bring a momentary relief to the other.

"Poor little girl; you must be very tired." His voice was very tender. "You are tired, aren't you?"

"A little," Evadne confessed, with weakly heroism.

"I say," said Dominick, with boyish concern, "you mustn't go home in that beastly 'bus. You'd better have a cab."

"I think I can manage," said Evadne, and stood on the other foot.

"No, that you shan't." Dominick's manhood asserted itself in care for weaker vessels. "I'm just going to get you one. You needn't always be so proud, when—when I say, you know, when a man would do just anything he could for you." Dominick's voice was shy, but his eyes were fervent.

"But that would make any girl proud, Mr. Blake—much more a silly little girl like me."

"Then I may——"

"It's too good of you. How kind you are, Mr. Blake! You spoil me."

Dominick whistled manfully from the Oxford Street pavement. At long last a hansom anchored with the horse's fore-feet on the kerb. Dominick helped Evadne in, shut the apron, pressed her hand, and turned to go without hope of further reward.

"See you on Saturday, then?" Evadne Smith called cheerily. "I get off at half-past two, you know."

Dominick's heart stood still with gratitude; passionate admiration leaped to his eyes. "You're a brick!" he murmured. "Are you sure you'd like it?"

Evadne leaned forward over the apron. "Yes; without Miss Jaikes to laugh at me," she said.

Dominick overpaid the cabman in a whirl of excitement. How close he and she had been drawn together in the dear intimacy of those sacred tears. She was the best, the most understanding little girl under the sun. She was a true woman, the kind to keep a man to high ideals.

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"Well, I think I've given him his half-crown's worth," said Evadne to herself, as she unbuttoned her shoes, and drew her heels from their peg-tops.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMONG many discoveries relating to himself, Dominick found he was separable into two distinct beings; Dominick the scholarly man of the world, and Dominick the bewildered boy.

Dominick, the man, appeared with the morning's hot water, and usually filled his body all the day, only to be dismissed at bed-time, when the boy put out the light, rolled himself in the bed-clothes, and took stock of daylight doings. They seemed so strangely artificial by moonlight; so wisely necessary by day.

On the pavements in the sunlight, the man walked with some assurance, certain of his abiding worth, not unpleasantly conscious of his looks. By night, the boy thought of deeds done clumsily, of words that bore no weight; banalities, stupidities, village narrowness, from which he had not purged himself. And, thinking, blushed. One part of him writhed, while the other analysed his feelings; the sudden tingling glow which ran from his toes to his hair-roots, deepening to great washes and waves of shame—stinging shame that cut his tender vanity like a whip. He knew the moment of its arrival, followed its increase to agony, and timed its gradual decline to the tired, bruised kind of feeling that lay heavy on him for an hour or

more. At such times his one feeling was hatred for all the world, which had been occupied remarking his follies, and scorn of himself for making sport for them.

There was another mood—a mood more sober—when he tried to understand the motives that pulled his actions of the day. This happened when self-consciousness let vanity off with a whole skin; when he was able to withdraw from himself, and review his actions detached from responsibility concerning them. At such times he thought of his old home, of Honor, and Dr. Drury; smelt once again the smell of the sun-warmed dunes; saw once more the red-brown marshes; heard the cry of the mews on the shore; or watched the rabbits scurry to their crowded warrens.

At such times, too, he thought of Mary; tried to understand his duty; whether he had any duty with regard to her. By day, the man was so occupied in finding out the right thing to feel on such matters that he had no time for deeds. He was analytical, inquisitive; that was all. Night showed him things with other eyes. He felt as though by to-morrow's dawn he must go to her; urge her to some justification of herself; strip her once and for all to the true woman who lay behind her trappings; and in that real Mary—low he whispered it to himself—find the beginning of a soul born from her love or her shame.

Daylight showed him his folly—the folly of a boy who did not know the ropes. Hiding behind this thought was another: he had to play his part to his daylight self; he dared not be real without, because he knew not how to be real within. He was that worst of poor things—a sham; yet, perhaps, not a despicable sham. So prayed the night-soul of Dominick; only a boy,

ignorant of himself, morally unmuscular, with a burden on him bigger than a boy should bear. The man Dominick shrugged his shoulders, dismissed ignorance and impotence alike, and hid himself beneath his learning. Dominick drove Dominick to fulfil himself in many ways.

So many thing were charges on him, he developed a conscience about trifles. That was the business man. Asked to post a letter, he was angry with himself if he passed the first pillar-box and dropped it in the second on his way. A man should be prompt in action. Yet scholars had a right to be dreamy. The umpire, the man of sound common-sense, weighed the case between the two.

He took many selves about with him throughout the day, as does everyone; but with Dominick, the unlikeness was acute; each was given to argue with the other, to the detriment of temper and common-sense. When a boy is busy listening to arguments within, all of absorbing interest for the time, or when he hears unwillingly from the same source reiterations of stale subjects, he becomes either garrulous or unsociable. Dominick grew either alarmingly talkative or as dumb as a log; while within him, sounding in his ears, the arguments grew deafening. It was only Evadne who drew him from incessant self-inspection, and so fulfilled a charity.

They went down to Hampton Court on the Saturday appointed, Evadne gowned anew for the occasion. She wore a blue muslin dress, tight about the waist and frilly about the feet; a wide muslin hat to match, and carried over her arm something fawn-coloured in the shape of a dust-coat. Dominick thought rightly that she had never looked so pretty, and gazed on her with adoration. She shook out her frills, while he paid

for the tickets—first-class—a piece of extravagance for which she scolded him, but liked him the better, too. She measured love by lavishness, whether of compliment or more solid things. He put her in the train with reverential care, climbed in, and shut the door. The gods were kind; they had the carriage to themselves.

Just the same embarrassment seized Dominick that seizes all children newly introduced, who are bidden by their elders to "make friends, and run away and play." Never had he felt more incapable of such profferings; never had such a horrible dumbness and heaviness settled on him. As in all moments of emotion, Dominick felt naked and shivering through sheer excess of feeling. The man forsook him, refusing to come at the call of the boy.

"I hope it isn't going to rain," he said, doing a bad best to tide over his embarrassment.

Evadne hoped not, with one glance at the blue sky and two at her blue dress. Was it for this kind of talk, she asked herself, that Dominick had paid extra—she counted the amount—for the pleasures of seclusion? The wooing had been something swifter with other men. She laughed in her sleeve at Dominick, yet wondered if she were less attractive to-day than heretofore.

"That frock of yours"—Dominick felt he was doing the right thing, but he spoke shyly—"An awful pity to get it spoilt."

Evadne smoothed down her frills complacently. "Blue always suits me," she said.

"I like blue," said Dominick. The effort was enormous.

Evadne smiled on him sidewise; it was a trick of hers, and gave her a curiously speculative look. "I'm glad we have a liking in common," she

answered; "you see, we know precious little of each other, do we?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know! Why, Mr. Blake, just count how many times you've seen me even."

Dominick counted obediently, but the effort was imperceptible. "I saw you first at the Gaelic League, in April—Monday, it was, the seventeenth, and I've seen you once a week ever since. And it's July."

"Is it really so long?"

Dominick leaned forward impulsively. "It seems years," he said. "I seem to have known you all my life." He drew back, watching the effect of his bombshell.

Evadne smiled vaguely. "Then, I wonder you haven't grown tired of a silly, uninteresting little thing like me," she said.

"Silly, uninteresting!" echoed Dominick.

"Well, aren't I silly?" In her turn she leaned forward, till the scent from her frills rolled out and sent his head spinning.

"You know how impossible it would be for any one to think that," he said, and drew back with a quite unconscious modesty.

"Well, you seem to think it, anyhow."

"I do?"

"You don't talk to me; you don't seem to care how I look, or if I've got a pretty frock or not. And I put it on, on purpose."

Dominick stretched out his hand—a hand which trembled a little. He just touched the hem of her garment. "Did you really put on that pretty dress for me?" he asked; and his voice shook. It seemed too wonderful to be true. Evadne could have enlightened him as to the etiquette of the situation. If a man gives a girl a treat, the girl

must not disgrace him by her clothes. It is a universal law.

"Well, I did hope you would be pleased with it," she said bashfully.

Dominick drew a deep breath. "It was awfully nice of you," he said with fervour; "and I think it's lovely. But I think I would like you just as well in any frock—even an old one, you know. You'd always look pretty, you couldn't help it." He looked at her with a fervour that made her hang her head, the lace frill of her big hat hiding her peeping eyes. "No, you couldn't help it," he repeated, suddenly bold, "any more than I can help thinking it or telling you I think it, *a cuisle geal mo chroidhe*." Her knowledge of Gaelic carried her not so far; it was this blessed ignorance which gave wings to his tongue.

"Then it means you think I'm worth it?" he added; there was a new assurance in his manner. "Look here, Evadne — I may call you Evadne, mayn't I; you don't mind? And I'm Dominick, remember."

Evadne murmured sweet vagueness. "I don't know that we ought," she said; and neither promised nor forbade.

"But you do like me a little?" pleaded Dominick, secure in the omen of the blue gown. He grew suddenly masterful; the boy in him leaped up, winged. "Say you like me a little," he urged, and somehow took her hands in his.

"I like you a little," said Evadne with demure obedience.

"Really?"

"Really." She gave herself a little shake. "Oh, you silly boy, should I have let you take me out if I didn't?"

Dominick changed sides of the carriage, but still

kept her hand. Evadne smiled passively under her lace frill. She was dealing with the things she knew, waiting with an open eye for developments.

"You wouldn't let anyone take you out that you didn't like—like how much, Evadne?"

"As if I should dream of it! How much? Oh, that depends."

"Depends on what?" asked Dominick eagerly.

"On him and on me," answered Evadne.

"Suppose it depended on me?"

Evadne gave a coquettish wriggle. "Well, that's not fair; I am letting you take me out," she said.

"And I want to know how much you like me. Evadne"—he pulled her a little nearer—"is liking the same as love?"

The lace frills of her hat brushed his black head. "What did you call me just now?" she asked below her breath, mighty curious to learn.

"When?"

"Just now, when—when you said you liked the look of——"

"You. Oh, you are beautiful!"

"My frock," corrected Evadne, with immense enjoyment.

"I called you"—Dominick's utterance was a little hurried—"I called you '*a cuisle geal mo chroidhe.*'"

"And it means?"

"It means, 'pulse of my heart,'" said Dominick unsteadily.

There was a moment's silence; each breathed with difficult irregularity. Then: "You shouldn't," said Evadne, with averted eyes.

"But if I meant it—if I loved you—then you wouldn't mind. This isn't play, darling; don't you know I love you? Oh, you must have known

it; you did, didn't you?" Dominick was only sure of it himself an hour ago. "I think," he ended rapturously, "that I must have known I loved you from the first minute I saw you; I'm sure I did."

"I think I liked you a little, too," said Evadne, inclining imperceptibly towards him. Dominick slid a possessive arm round her agreeable waist.

"Did you really, darling?" he murmured in stupefaction. The rest of the journey seemed like five minutes. They emerged at Hampton as from a magic carpet, each a little bewildered by the surprises of the journey.

The dust blew merrily along the road, where the tram-lines usurped more than their fair share of ground. Dominick and Evadne toiled along in the heat towards the long, red pile of buildings. "How jolly it would be to have a motor," sighed Evadne, as a big Darracq shot by at something over legal pace.

"Perhaps we will have one some day," answered Dominick, to whom, in the heights, impossibilities were themselves impossible. There was a rapturous accent on the pronoun.

"Perhapses don't build cars," said the realist Evadne with a sigh. They walked on in silence up the wide roadway towards the Court. A steamboat disgorged its passengers at the landing-place; and all the banks were lined with pleasure craft trimmed with gay flowers and flags. Dominick's spirit danced in the glamour of the sunshine, reflecting, so it seemed to him, but the gayer sunshine in his heart. Evadne saw, and envied. She weighed Dominick and his slender promises, his vague personal worth, with the evidences of wealth around—the bright flowers and flags of the house-boats, the big launches;

above all, with the dress and appearance of the men and women who owned them. "People with nothing to do, and too much to do it with," as she thought with a sigh.

Dominick turned round with a smile. "How pretty it all is," he said, indicating the dancing water, the general air of gaiety. "There's nothing like the country after all, is there, darling? Wouldn't it be fine if we could have a little house of our own down here. How jolly it would be on Saturdays with the river so near; we'd have a boat——"

"It would be awfully cold in winter," said Evadne, with a prophetic shiver.

"The winter's a long way off," answered Dominick; then frowned a little. A picture of the waste sand-hills, with their frozen grass and wintry sea, obtruded itself, uninvited, on his mind. The awful silence of winter gat hold of him for the moment, when "no birds sing"—not even the little bird in the heart, thought Dominick. He shivered, too, shivered with something more than thought of cold. Things of the spirit had an inconvenient habit of pressing close to Dominick at unseasonable times. If ever time was unseasonable, it was surely now, with the soft blue of July overhead and the sense of well-being in his heart.

"Look! there's a break-down," said Evadne suddenly. She seemed pleased. It gave her a distant sense of fortune's justice that a car should come to grief, just because she had none of her own. The mushroom crowd seemed to share her feelings.

"What a pity; and it's such a monster," said Dominick.

They looked incuriously while the chauffeur did a bad best to set things right. He lay in

Japanesque attitudes above and below the car, with a tool-roll spread out before him.

"They don't get things all their own way," said Evadne, with a little satisfied sigh. "And I daresay they spent over a thousand on that motor, too."

"Why not, if they'd got it to spend?" said Dominick generously.

The owner of the car got out to lend a hand—or criticize. The woman with him put back some of her veils and took off her goggles. She glanced with impatient superiority over the heads of the crowd.

"Why, she's quite pretty," said Evadne, with grudging surprise. Dominick glanced at her appraisingly, boy-fashion. Then a furious tide of red rushed up to the roots of his hair. Mary's cool, unrecognizing glance met his full, with a little smile. She noticed him, for Dominick was not to be passed over in a crowd; idly thought him a picturesque-looking boy, and let her interest wander elsewhere; but to be drawn back again by the look of almost furious recognition in his eyes. He saw the birth of remembrance—vague at first, then certain—edge her smile.

She knew, and, like himself, stood powerless in the grip of the conventionality they both despised. It was pillory for both. Silence laid impressive fingers on each mouth. Dominick set his teeth, through which the breath came fast, in a wild rage. Within hand-stretch, without thought of worldly wisdom, with nothing but sheer savagery of feeling, yet impotent in the face of the ignorant crowd. He felt the blood surging in his brain, and in the torrent, swimming with the tide, the maddest thoughts that ever leaped from the deeps of his consciousness.

Baron Schreimer gave advice in a thick German accent—advice the chauffeur ignored with a superior smile. Mary looked again on Dominick, then on the girl beside him. In that look he read the thoughts passing through her mind—base-bred thoughts, hall-marks of her own degradation; the eye for evil, which is in itself an evil thing. Censure too, appraisement of values; amid his mind's tumult, Dominick caught himself wishing Evadne's hair was not so bright a gold and her muslin frock a thought less beautifully blue. Mary measured, weighed, and gauged her in a look.

"Come along, Dominick, we don't want to stop here all day," said Evadne's voice; and her careful accent suddenly grated on his ears. "Mercy on us," she added as they resumed their walk, "how odd you look; one would think you'd seen a ghost. Who is it? Some of those old frumps got loose from Hampton Court? You are a funny boy to go out for a day's pleasure."

"Am I? I was just counting the cost of a car like that," said Dominick; and spoke the truth.

CHAPTER XXII.

EMMA JAIKES had long since finished her head of Jason, but for artistic, or other reasons, she kept an inquisitive eye on Dominick. He seemed to her to have aged beyond his due; there were dark rims to his eyes, betraying lines on his smooth cheeks. She suspected him of nothing worse than over-work, but in idle moments flung him a thought or two. It would be such a pity, from an artistic standpoint, that he should lose his looks. She worried about the waste.

The wheel of fate did not run smooth for Dominick, because he interfered with its course. Even his joy in Evadne was lessened by the fact that he might not openly proclaim her his. She agreed to wear his ring—indeed, helped him to choose it—but decided that they must not call themselves engaged; they must rest content with the knowledge of their secret love, otherwise complications might ensue. Dominick grumbled, but bowed to her law. Bowed also, with a little feeling of dishonour, to the decision not to introduce him to her people, dwellers in smaller Suburbia. "I would like to know your father and mother, darling," he had said.

"They don't like young men to come round," said Evadne. There had been many such, disquieting to parental instincts.

"But I needn't come often. Don't you think they ought to know about it?"

Evadne faced him with a pretty contempt. "Is it wrong to want to get out of leading strings?" she asked, with a hand tucked to its limit through his arm. "Suppose they forbid the banns, where should we poor things be then? I couldn't come and meet you, if they forbade it, could I? Don't you see—how can I put it?—they want me to make a match. People are silly enough to admire me, you see, and they are awfully ambitious."

Smith ambition soared no higher than prosperous respectability, with a tendency to Evangelical views; they would assuredly have asked of Dominick his creed before his caste, and probably his morals before either. Evadne left this unexplained, just as Dominick left hidden his little secret about Mary. There was not complete confidence between them. Dominick thought how sweet and truly womanly she was to fling away a crown for love's dear sake. Evadne hoped it would keep him quiet, and impressed her sacrifice on him in many ways. She had her own private anxieties, of a kind incommunicable to her devout lover: sentimental interest respecting Captain Silver; calculations about Peter Rudd. She needed something to take her attention from the little webs and intricacies of agitation she had woven round her by her pretty intrigues; and she found this interest in Dominick, and some compensation in his tribute to her shrine.

Besides, it satisfied her need for romance; lifted her unimportant little love-affair to higher levels. Just as she used Dominick, suppressing or exaggerating his devotion, with Captain Silver or Peter Rudd, at the moment's need, so she used her parents' prejudices to soothe or soften Dominick's

heart; coaxing from him fresh endearments and caresses, fresh protestations, only to be betrayed to others later on. "So, you see, we must be very patient — we will, won't we?" she said playfully, with a little reassuring pressure on his arm; a pressure that set the blood leaping in Dominick's heart. It was such an encouragement, almost worth the tongue-tied silence. "And be quite quiet about our little secret to every one," she added, with a warning lifted finger. "I couldn't let my boy be laughed at, could I?"

Dominick was Celt enough to find nothing laughable in love; it seemed sacred. "They might laugh if they dared," he said with a respectable flash in his blue eyes.

It was just what Evadne dreaded; a roused Dominick would be neither to hold nor to bind, capable of dreadful indiscretions. "You don't think of me," she pleaded, with down-curved lips and eloquent eyes. Naturally, Dominick protested that he thought of her before everything, and at all hours of day and night. Evadne remained unsatisfied.

"I don't believe you," she said pettishly. "And you don't know what it feels like to be driven to meet you here like this." It was a wet day, and the National Gallery received them into its hospitable halls. Dominick forbore the retort obvious, nor did he remind her that the place of meeting was her choice. He looked concerned, and loved her for her fine feelings.

They anchored before "Venus and Mars," by Botticelli. Neither regarded it; Evadne had no love for art, only a working knowledge of the Gallery as a meeting-place. She despised its cheapness, for the advantage of free admission was only another matter for contempt. Evadne was

of the race that must pay its way, as lavishly as vicariously, before it sees the worth or beauty of an object. Dominick knew the Venus, but his eyes were fully occupied with Evadne, adorable as ever in a rain-proof coat, her hair pleasantly free from rats'-tails in spite of the weather.

"I don't believe you think of me at all," she repeated, tilting her hat to a more becoming angle with the help of her reflection in the glass. "You're only trying to deceive me. How about that Honor Drury—I believe you really like her best!"

"I don't like her in the same way," protested Dominick. "She's an old friend, that's all; I've known her all my life. You couldn't be jealous of Honor, avourneen, she's so different from you."

"Thank you," said Evadne haughtily. "Who told you I was jealous of a dowdy little country-bred thing like that, who's never been out of her village? No, I don't think I'm jealous of her, thank you all the same."

Dominick looked steadily into the placid face of the "Venus," so simply acceptant of the sleeping Mars. The colour of her hair was fair, like Honor's; the eyes as grey and as direct as hers. His heart beat with a little indignation; it seemed as if from the distance she claimed his championship. He felt jealous for her.

"Honor's an old friend," he repeated with some sturdiness, "and she's not dowdy. One of the men at the Museum says she has the figure of an Artemis. I wish you knew her; you couldn't help thinking no end of her, and she would admire you awfully." The thought shot through his mind at the moment winged with doubt: How would Honor like Evadne?

"Old friends," echoed Evadne with a certain accent, and a certain toss of her golden hair. "Oh!

I daresay a man could be friends with a girl who has a figure like Artemis. I don't go to music-halls, so I haven't seen her, and can't say."

"She isn't an actress," said Dominick in some surprise.

"I don't want to know who she is," returned Evadne; "the name's enough for me. Gentlemen never speak of nice women by their Christian names."

"My dear sweet little ignoramus," said Dominick, with an educational hand on her angry arm; "Artemis is a goddess—a Greek goddess—not anything one shouldn't mention, or would I be mentioning her to my lady?"

"I'm sure I can't say," said Evadne, partly reassured. The figure of a Greek goddess was not half so formidable as the figure of a celebrity of the "halls." "It makes one have to be very careful with you," she added. "I never knew any one say such things as you do."

Something in the speech struck Dominick: Evadne differed from Honor in many obvious ways. Honor was so direct, so unsuspicious; but Evadne—all the tender chivalry of his heart leaped to her defence—Evadne had fended for herself in perilous passes.

"I never know what you will be doing next," Evadne added, looking round her at the empty room. Dominick did; their reflections met in the glass that protected Venus.

"Now, do you understand?" he said; "you're the first girl I've ever kissed in my life." He was not the first man to kiss Evadne; but she did not allude to other experiences, nor remark that Dominick's clean lips felt like a girl's by contrast.

"That's just it," said Evadne, with wrath at heart; a sense, too, of distaste for the lack of

spice in the affair. She lived on emotional thrills. She shook her head, and set her hat straight again. "You make me wish I'd never come; never known you; never met you. What must you think of me?" She looked as though the tears must brim over. "I begged you to be careful; it's not kind."

Dominick said he couldn't help it, with evident intentions of repeating the crime. Evadne drew back, this time with decision.

"We must help it," she said, with kindly share in the disgrace. "But I mustn't come out with you if you do such things. Anyone might have seen; and I don't like it—I don't, indeed!"

"Story!" whispered Dominick fondly. The colour deepened in Evadne's cheek. It looked—he thought, adoringly—like the tinge on the pink-lined shells he had picked up in childish days at Norton. "Oh, you little sinner, don't you know where story-tellers go to?" he added, and made her blush again.

"I oughtn't to like it," faltered Evadne, with a modest droop of her golden head.

"But you do!" Dominick's heart felt on fire. "Whisper, my darling: you do like it just a little, don't you?"

Evadne began to grow frightened; Dominick's eyes glowed in a way she had learned to know. "I'm all alone," she said. She could measure the effect of her words on him. He pulled himself up suddenly. "I beg your pardon," he answered; and waited with a beating heart.

"I daren't come out with you," Evadne went on slowly, wondering at his ways. "In any case, I mustn't come next Saturday; no, indeed I mustn't." Dominick looked imploring. "I must go and see my people; you wouldn't have me

neglect them—my own father and mother—would you ? " She looked filial ; Dominick was regretful, but worshipping. " And I shan't come to the League meeting on Monday, either," Evadne added. " I'm so afraid they'll notice things. Yes ; I'll let you know when I can come again."

They parted with this understanding, in spite of efforts to laugh prudence to scorn. Evadne silenced him efficiently by saying she must take care of herself, if other people didn't. Dominick felt the implied reproach, and blamed himself for his importunity. He should have been less selfish, had more thought for her, remembered the great gift she was giving him, and made himself more worthy of the sacrifice.

" I know you hold me cheap," she had said ; and he thought the tears were in her eyes. Heaven only knew how dear he held her, he had answered, for it was past his own expression. And because of his love he must be more careful, less importunate ; wait her times and seasons with a grateful heart.

* * * * * *

It was so different from his relationship with Honor ; he realized it acutely ; sent back a memory-laden sigh to the other manners of that bygone time ; and pictured to himself how rapturous it would be to have Evadne in like case, and how she would fill Honor's old position with added individual charm.

" One could do so differently in the country," he thought, in the middle of a tough bit of Irish ; his imagination spread wide in search of green fields and simpler codes of manners. He neglected the root and branches of the word " maccu," to range in fancy through brown marsh-meadows

by Evadne's side. When he came back to commonplaces he found he had erred, and strayed considerably from the work in hand, to the exclusion of certain valuable notes. He sat up till all hours to make up for lost time; then went blind-eyed to meet Evadne in the fields of sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHILE love's young dream throve apace with Dominick, a veritable mushroom growth, a staider, circumspecter wooing budded in Norton. The Duke cast serious eyes on Honor; found her fair to astral as to ordinary eye-sight; made up his slow, Scottish mind, and, of deliberate intent, set about making love. His wooing was of the kind imperceptible to its object. When he read her extracts from his book, or asked her advice on the subject of Maid's Meadow, or spoke of Venilia's well, she thought him a kind, rather talkative old man, who took an interest in her for her father's sake, and who sometimes interrupted her in her pursuits. It never occurred to her matter-of-fact brain that she ought to read between the lines of his slow speech, or measure his attentions to herself, any more than she weighed her own acceptance of them.

Mrs. Stone was most explicit on the subject of Honor's presumption. Though she could not quite approve of ducal opinions, she was swayed by his position. Among the lesser clergy there is a divine right of dukes no less than that of kings. A few fat livings, too, were in the ducal gift, and Mrs. Stone knew her own deserts. Policy and prejudice went hand in hand, excusing his ways with the truest charity. Some people say this virtue invariably begins at home.

"A good wife could do so much for him," she said. "Naturally, a man in that position has enormous temptations, none the less from having been brought up in a different sphere. Yet I feel sure that, below his sad views—I have never ventured to express the grief they cause you, my dear—that there is some childlike humility in him which must eventually bring him back to the truth. There would be something beautiful in the complete self-surrender of a man of his type to the Church. I feel sure that he has a reverent mind, and that under proper guidance he would be led. I wish he would marry dear Lady Rebecca Hythe; she has such a perfect faith."

"I don't think he cares about her," faltered Mr. Stone.

"N-n-o, perhaps not. He seems bewitched by that artful little Drury thing. I've no patience with her, laying her traps as demure as you please; and I'm sure I heard there was an understanding—if not something more—between her and young Blake before he left."

The vicar went on with his weeding; both did their apportioned task in the trim garden side by side. "You told me so," his wife added, uprooting a pansy by mistake.

He accepted the responsibility, as he did many which were none of his by right. "He comes back next week, so he will find out for himself," he said, and replanted the pansy furtively.

"Oh! did you think of writing to tell him?" Mrs. Stone asked eagerly. The vicar had no such intention in his mind. "It might be a duty," she added; "it would be very hard on the poor boy—yes, John, I shall call him a poor boy; he was far more sinned against than sinning, and his bringing up was deplorable—to come back

and find that designing girl setting her cap at his Grace!"

"But, my dear," the vicar said in meek disagreement, "I think his Grace runs after Miss Drury as much as she does after him."

Mrs. Stone sniffed eloquently. "Do you call her pretty, John?" she asked.

The vicar pulled up a length of ground elder very tenderly; he felt the question was as delicate as the weed-roots. "Perhaps more pleasing-looking," he said carefully. "She has promise, I think; but she is very young."

"Not too young for the most detestable kind of worldly wisdom, or to know which side her bread is buttered, you may depend! She puts me out of patience, walking about with that ugly white cat of hers. Such affectation! Who takes a cat about as if it were a dog? Did you see her yesterday with the Duke? There she was with the cat, and there he was with his butterfly net, for all the world like a couple of children. She wouldn't let him alone, and hurried him away when he wanted to stop and speak to me, as if she was afraid of losing him."

"My dear, you know how unobservant I am. Without you, I should miss all the finer shades of meaning. Did he look as though he wanted to leave her?"

"The Duke is all courtesy, of course," said Mrs. Stone, "and while she was making eyes at him like that he couldn't openly show his real wishes. I told him I specially wanted a little talk with him on parish matters—I want him to turn out those Dissenters at Maid's Meadow—but she wouldn't let him go."

"Were they alone?"

"Quite alone. Imprudent; was it not? She

said something about hurrying on to catch up her father; but she didn't deceive me, I can tell you! Mark my words, she was trying to make him compromise her, and so be forced to propose."

"But, my dear, such duplicity in so young a girl! Do you really think it possible?"

Mrs. Stone nodded portentously. "And I quite agree, John, that Dominick should have a hint, at least, how matters stand, before he comes down and finds it out for himself." She bundled her heap of weeds into the barrow, and dismissed the subject from her mind.

And so it came about that the vicar wrote a mild, gossiping letter to Dominick, as he had done once or twice before, with the amiable hope that such attentions might keep his feet in paths of righteousness. Dominick was agile in skipping the advice, and not over-keenly interested in such village news as was imparted to him. One sentence in the letter stayed him: "The Duke of Northwyk is paying great attention to your old friend, Miss Drury, and the village is excited."

Dominick threw down the letter with a contemptuous exclamation, then picked it up again and again read it through. It seemed possible—horribly possible; of course he was pained by Honor's secrecy, her lack of confidence in him. That was enough to account for his mixed feelings—the jumble of surprise, anger, and curious sense of loss that seethed within him.

He wrote at reproachful length to Honor, implying that he was hurt by her reticence, measuring her conduct by his own. A duke seemed a very big man to Dominick; Honor inferred as much from his letter, and owned it might be so, but more as a caste than as an individual. She rarely thought of Robert Bruce as a duke, realizing his rank, as

it were, by accident, on rare occasions, with an intense surprise. She was accustomed to him as her father's old friend ; it seemed strange that Dominick should imagine her specially proud of that friendship, or that it honoured her father in any special degree to call the great man "Bob." She hoped she treated him with the deference that appeared to be his due, and took heart when she remembered how Mrs. Stone's servility distressed him. It was very puzzling to democratic Honor, used to the measurement of men as men, taking little heed of the "guinea's stamp," equally content with honest copper, only anxious to do right as far as she knew it, to defer to age, and be courteous to all.

Dominick's letter puzzled her. She knew she had written as usual, telling him all she thought could interest him—describing the projected book, the proposed scope of the "reformed holiday" movement, naturally saying little of herself, because that self seemed insignificantly interesting; but, as naturally, hiding nothing, because there was nothing to hide.

Dominick's indignation ran over his letter; he was angry because he did not know her mind. And he was surprisingly anxious to know it, for purely personal reasons, amazing in one whose whole heart and soul, and mind and strength, were bound up in the hope of Evadne. He implied that old friends were thrust from their rightful places by those untried: a real dog-in-the-manger snarl, for he took little trouble to keep that rightful place. And Honor could not know that ever between them danced the figure of the golden-haired Evadne, whose personality hid Honor's self from Dominick.

"He will see we're just the same when he comes

home," thought Honor, and put the matter from her mind.

"How careful I will have to be!" thought Dominick, intent on himself. Thought, too, of a forbidden pleasure; confidences with Honor would so much increase the charm. But confidences with Honor would mean breach of faith with Evadne. He put away temptation with a sigh.

"Don't you forget me with the Artemis-girl," was Evadne's coquettish farewell. Dominick's passionate rejoinder lingered pleasantly in her mind as she changed her gown and went off to meet Captain Silver, of the H.A.C. and Throgmorton Street.

* * * * * *

Dominick found Norton changed, indeed. The slow marsh life had moved—or so it seemed—since he went away. Really, he came back to a familiar place with open eyes, with the quickened perceptions which resulted from his quicker life. He had to reconstruct his memories with the realities which now met him. He wondered how the change had come about. Not simply because the Duke lived at the Castle, as he was inclined to suspect, though, naturally, the village took a certain inquisitive pride in its grand seigneur actually resident within its boundaries. Nor had its tone perceptibly improved, though there were fewer men out of work and women out at elbows, through ducal influence and higher pay. The change lay more in Dominick himself than in the village; he had grown much during the interval. Things of one-time importance had receded into a far background; he saw their size impartially with his clearer sight.

He had been a boy—he now felt himself a man;

he had some place in the larger affairs of life, to an extent he had proved himself, and felt firm ground beneath his feet. As a boy, he had brazened matters out, insisted arrogantly on his rights; as a man, his rights were granted him without captious argument. Above all, the then fixture was now mobile; his own wishes the axis on which his movements turned. Dominick found some cause for self-satisfaction as he made his rounds. He could afford to be gracious, even to Mrs. Stone, whose dry congratulations were duly presented on a suitable occasion.

And all these gifts, he told himself, were shrined in Evadne's love. Worthy of that, he was worthy of every perfect gift. Out of her infinite fulness she had given him all; he had brought her his naked heart, and with commendably prompt decency she had clothed it in the purple of her love and the fine linen of her maiden purity. So Dominick felt, and so he told himself, in lavish word-embroidery. All must go well with him because of the love between the two. So he saw Norton bathed in the glory of his own romance, and found it full of that light which never was on sea or land, but only in the heart of him who sees it. He loved Evadne more fervently afar than he could do with her at hand. Romance stripped off shyness. He dared all in his dreams; talked with her openly, sometimes brilliantly in the vagrancies of his imagination; enjoyed rhapsodies without a thought to trouble him; heard with his mind's ear her loving whispers; and, unknown to himself, enjoyed her absence much more than he had ever enjoyed her presence, among the splendid impossibilities his fancy dealt him with such lavish hands.

He met the Duke before many days were gone;

met him, hoping, or perhaps fearing, to find in him the real man of the world he hoped to imitate; at least a fine figure, and distinguished presence, speaking of intimate acquaintance with many worlds. When he saw the Duke he laughed, just a little bitterly, though with the air of one who knows the world and the ways of women. Below the adopted cynicism rankled something like jealousy, for his ideal Honor almost as much as for himself. It was enviable to have a name fit to carry one into the presence of kings; it would be worth anything to have found Honor simple and unsophisticated as when he left her. She defrauded him of some unknown quantity; he felt the loss of something he could not name. She must have changed, he thought reproachfully, and forgot the greater change within himself.

"What can you see in such a little atrocity, except his title?" he asked Honor. "I would never have believed that you, or the doctor, would have thrown over an old friend for such a thing."

"We haven't thrown over a friend," said Honor.

"How about me?" asked Dominick, with a silly resentment afflicting the heart that was vowed to Evadne.

"He's an older friend to father, and nearer his age," Honor said.

"But to you?"

"He is very kind." Honor's answer was indifferent, innocent enough to ordinary ears.

"Bosh," said Dominick, in a tone he had never used to Evadne. It was some compensation to use it now to Honor; one advantage of a sister is that one can employ abusive terms without breaking her heart.

They were in the alley with the close-clipped laurel hedges, where Dominick and Honor had

walked the night before he went to town. Honor remembered both the likeness and the difference; Dominick eliminated both.

"No; it isn't bosh," said Honor, a little angry in her turn. "He is kind; he means to be kind, and he doesn't snap at me as you do."

"I've known you longer," said Dominick, a little ashamed.

"You might have known me better," responded Honor.

"You didn't mind; you knew it's only a way of saying things," grumbled Dominick, half to Honor, half to the shadowy laurels.

Honor picked a prominent leaf, doubled it to cracking point in her hand, and tore it slowly across before replying. "I think I do mind—in a way."

Dominick came to a standstill, immensely astonished. "You shouldn't," he said, without much tact.

Honor said nothing for a minute, she had some difficulty in disentangling self from her thoughts; she felt hurt, as well as angry. "I don't think you were quite so critical before you went to London," she said at last.

"Oh!" said Dominick, with a little sneer, "perhaps you are more sensitive now than you were then. You weren't used to dukes, you see."

Honor looked at him steadily, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, beyond the little vulgar bitterness. "How silly you are, Dominick!" she said.

Dominick, not quite unconscious of the fact himself, turned and rent her. "And who promised faithfully that our old friendship should last, I should like to know? Who was 'silly' then? You know well enough you wouldn't have got tired of me if that old fool with his beastly title hadn't come between."

"Come between! Don't talk such nonsense," retorted Honor, roused for once. "You know well enough it's your own doing if we aren't friends. The poor old Duke has nothing to do with it." Her face flamed suddenly, and she spoke with a strange difficulty. "I know we don't stand as we were before you went to London—neither of us feels the same; but it's because you are hiding something. Do you think I can't see it? I know you are. You're always wanting to say something, and drawing back, because you think it's wiser not. And I'm curious; I want you to tell us what it is."

Dominick started, and pushed Smike away with his foot—an attention resented by Honor as much as by the great white cat. She stooped and smoothed his fur, giving Dominick time to recover. "I wish he wasn't such a silent beast," he said. "I can't stand anything sliding out of the bushes like that."

"Evil conscience," said Honor, without malice.

Dominick blushed like any girl—more genuinely than the modest Evadne, to whom he breathed his vows anew. "What a goose you are, Honor!" he said, speaking fairly naturally for one rather unaccustomed in the gentle art of prevarication. "Do you suspect me of pocketing the gold torques and things from the old place up in town? Hiding things!—I like that, I like it immensely. Ever since I've been down here you've been making mysteries—I kick 'em up, I swear I do, at every step; and if that old rascal of a Duke isn't at the bottom of it, I'm damned, that's all."

The man within applauded the speech. It sounded so exactly what a man should say, swear-word and all—so emphatic and concise, with just the proper amount of dignity in his tone.

"The Duke has nothing to do with it," repeated Honor.

"He'd like to have." It was the boy who spoke.

Honor resumed her walk. "You do make it difficult to keep the peace," she said.

"But I suppose you'll allow me to have eyes in my head, won't you?"

Honor said nothing; her main idea was to escape as soon as possible from that horrible walk, where the laurel hedges seemed to shut in countless memories. She knew she was foolish, felt a pang of ashamed self-consciousness, and tried to push obtrusive self out of the quarrel. Boy-wise, and like a boy not too well-bred, Dominick tried to hide his own discomfiture by chaff. He was sorry he had hurt Honor's feelings, yet rather pleased to have broken down her self-control. "I didn't know it had gone so far," he said. "I wouldn't have said so much. Of course, he's all your fancy paints him; I daresay he's a foot or two taller than he looks. She shall have her Duke, then, if she likes—no one else would want him, that's certain." And Dominick's fancy painted Evadne in very original colours.

"Do you want to quarrel, Dominick?" Honor said at last. Dominick saw the red flush in her face, and something quite new in her eyes. He was not sure, there was more than a spice of pleasure in what he did. "Mayn't I even bite my thumb at you?" he asked, with aggravating appearance of alarm. "What will you do?—set Smike to scratch my eyes out? Faith, you look capable of it yourself! Pooh, Honor! don't be silly; one can't help taking a rise out of you."

"I think you must try to help it," Honor said.

"Must I? And suppose it doesn't matter two

pins to me whether you turn sulky or not? You aren't one bit like what you used to be—a girl one could be fond of."

"Ditto," said Honor, losing her temper in her turn.

"There; I knew it," said Dominick at random. "I come down to what was once my home, where I hoped—oh, goodness knows what I hoped—and find you changed out of all knowledge. Set up, simply because his high and mighty grace, the Duke of Northwyk, has been pleased to admire you. Honor, is this you?"

"That's vulgar, simply," said Honor.

Dominick drew in his lips, and a dull flush settled in his face. "Of course, I haven't had your social advantages," he answered. Honor felt a pang of angry shame entirely for him.

"Let's drop the subject," she said with obvious effort. Dominick felt disinclined to agree; Honor had put herself too much in the right for dignified retreat.

"I suppose you meant it as a hint you've had enough of my society," he said. "Of course, as I'm vulgar, one can understand you'll be glad to be quit of me. I didn't ask for the criticism, and I'm not interested in etiquette. I'm not ashamed of myself; I'm only sorry I'm not good company for you." He turned to Smike, the picture of disdainful sleekness, walking by Honor's side. "Snobs cats are," he said; "I suppose they catch it from their owners!"

Honor said nothing, but turned and walked down the long alley away from him. He had half a mind to run after her, force her to come back, and listen to explanations. But Honor's back was rigid and unapproachable; and, looking after her, Dominick felt himself a fool for his pains.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DOMINICK was partly angry and a larger half ashamed. Such small amount of common-sense as the gods had given him protested not in vain. He had no jurisdiction over Honor, no right to her confidence; above all, no right to suspect her of concealment save that he himself had something to conceal, and so became suspicious of all men. He had given himself away open-handedly, and made a fool of himself in her eyes.

His analytical mind allowed him no comfort of excuses. He could not help seeing himself as he stood; calling himself, as it were, into a doom-ring of other selves, who summed him up and gave judgment on him. He knew he was envious of Honor, yet there was a certain strain of fine jealousy backing the mean thought. It was not all wrong, all vulgar. He had lost faith in Honor. She had seemed to him above the temptations of the ordinary girl, splendidly indifferent to principalities and powers; advantages, which, he knew, weighed heavily with himself. No doubt, the temptation to become a duchess is as heavy as it is rare; Dominick honestly tried to measure its worth. Yet the judges in the doom-ring condemned Honor, just as they condemned himself. There seemed two wrongs for Dominick to add up and make into one right. And Dominick paid less heed to what

was right than to that which satisfied his sense of beauty. Sin was only sin when it became ugly. Honor's backsliding was ugly, even as his own loss of self-control was ugly. His æsthetic sense was offended with both.

Dominick was never simple, never able to do the right thing instinctively because it was right. He confused his values in his sense of the picturesque. And he analysed himself continually for some small residuum of truth, knowing all the while with hideous certainty that there was none to find. He could not be honest with himself, because he could never find that self. Therein lay the root of all his troubles.

He went down to the sand-hills because his mood demanded their presence as a background; the restless sea was in keeping with his emotions. His old enemy understood him better than any living person—better even than Evadne—through the kinship between them. He watched the flight of a gull, low over the indigo water, alighting for a moment only to flash like silver further on. He wondered morbidly if the sea attracts to her beings only of like nature with herself—things that never settle, always passing, passing, agonising to be gone. Perhaps he, child of the sea as he was, had the same gift. His thoughts seemed to flow with the waves in some strange, rhythmical fashion, just as if they were whispered in the sound. He watched the set of the water, running south with the inflow of the tide. Just so ran the drift of his desires, controlled by something quite apart from himself. He seemed to understand so well the anger of the sea, impotent but rebellious to the end. The thin summer ripples ran up the beach, leaving a starfish high and dry. Dominick could understand the need of the sea for cruelty.

He seemed to see himself at one with her, sent from shore to shore at the will of an outside agency, neither controlling his tides nor submitting himself to the force which guided them.

It was so different, he told himself, with Honor. His thoughts came slowly, as if he turned with idle hands the pages of a book. Honor had the gift of submission; he seemed to hear her voice asking: "Does it matter after all?" to the questions that seemed all the world to him. She was content with the turn of the wheel, strong because she could refrain from fighting fate. For the moment Dominick felt a craving for her calm acceptance of the things that are; something very like a need for herself. Then despised himself both for the thought and for the need. Why should he care for Honor when he had Evadne? Was it not but another proof of his sea-birth, wavering between the shores, unable to be loyal to either?

Then, with horrible insight he knew that he saw Honor's worth more clearly because another man desired her much. Another proof that he himself was but a reflection of other men. Like the sea, he had no colour of his own. He had no real self; he was but a mirage among the sand-dunes; a thin shadow of humanity; a ghost among men. He brooded on the notion, playing with it.

He sat down among the dunes, girdling his knees and looking seawards with unobservant eyes. The true genius of the place was with him, whispering to his soul its tale of desolation.

Right and left ran the smooth, marram-crowned sand-hills, fading into the reaches of infinite sky. Ahead lay the sombre sea; silence held her breath in the unspeakable loneliness of the place.

"Yet I feel sure I love Evadne," said Dominick

to himself. "Why should I feel the need of Honor?"

Some sage once said that each man, being himself of dual nature, needs two wives for his completion; otherwise one part of him goes unfilled, for the woman does not exist who is at once and equally his mistress and his comrade. But exigeant man expects her to be both, whence arises confusion and gnashing of teeth.

Dominick understood that Evadne appealed only to part of himself, that in some degree he felt happier with Honor; he seemed to need both for his fulfilment. Evadne brought him new thoughts and new emotions, unexpectednesses which charmed him by their novelty. Honor brought back his childhood, the little intimacies of the hours when they had suffered or rejoiced together. She was so like a stronger, more tranquil self.

Perhaps Dominick gauged her real lack when he told himself he would have loved her more if she had been with him less, if she were more like a girl. She had been brought up by a man among men. What wonder, then, that the subtler shades of girlhood were not hers? She was as direct as a man; Dominick resented it. He probed further: Evadne was so meekly ready for instruction, accepting his word in all things. Honor met him on his own brain level. He discussed matters with Honor; he instructed Evadne; and the fact weighed with him more than he knew, in spite of his analysis. Then, too, he wanted Evadne's sentiment, easily expressed, easily felt, measured by the pint or gallon according to her mood. Honor was no creature of moods, she was simply and entirely herself. "Just Honor," as Dominick said; one knew her to her depths, or thought one did. One had few surprises concerning her;

Evadne bristled with them. Yet, with it all, there was something in Honor which drew him near to her; made him know that, if he could only find it, somewhere at the back of his mind lay a certainty, waiting for its day of birth; just as much a certainty as the life hidden in a little seed, buried in the earth. In each case it is necessary to wait for proof; and Dominick was too young to know the worth of waiting.

Once again his mind measured the two girls. He went back in thought to the day he asked Evadne to his rooms. "Oh! I couldn't," she had said, and blushed. It marked her off as by a sharp line from the other girls he knew. He could not help a thrill at his own potentially dangerous person. Probably, most boys of two-and-twenty have felt it as a compliment. Yet his pleasure hid an awkward doubt: How came the innocent Evadne to suspect the ways of men? He put it away with a blush, but the thought returned again.

"I suppose we men are brutes," he said to himself, and felt a queer little pleasure in the thought of his virility.

He wished he had to meet temptation, just for the glory of avoiding it for Evadne's sake; but temptation and Dominick were not on bowing terms. He speculated as to its possibility, that was all. And he wondered why Honor seemed so aloof in spite of intimacy, while Evadne beckoned him in spite of distances. "I might as well have left poor Honor's photograph where it was," he told himself reproachfully, and felt himself shabby in his treatment of her. As for Evadne, being herself a matter of colouring, expression and eyes, she made a poor picture, and had not given him one.

Then a shadow, a stumpy and distorted shadow, flung itself gnome-wise along the face of the dunes. The Duke scrambled down the side of Dominick's sand-hill, and came awkwardly to ground hard by. He was sand-stained, and rather breathless. Dominick resented his presence extremely.

"I saw you from above," the Duke explained, and sat himself down by the boy. "I was glad to see you—very glad—because I wanted just a little talk with you."

Dominick desired nothing less; so he dug his fingers into the sand and said nothing.

"I'm right in thinking you don't like me," said the Duke after a little pause; he turned his vacant eyes on the boy. "I feel I'm right, though I can't see what your face says." Another pause. "I am right, am I not?"

Just because a Duke was a duke to Dominick, he made himself meet him on level terms. His chin was in his hands; his eyes looked seawards. "I don't know what you judge by," he said; and his voice was carefully indifferent.

"Don't you?" the Duke asked briskly. "I judge you by feelings—yours and mine. Perhaps neither likes the other; I think it's possible. Perhaps I envy you your long legs and the power of your youth. What I want to know is, for what do you envy me?"

"I don't put myself into comparison with you," said Dominick with arrogant humility, and a pang at his breast not unconnected with Honor.

The Duke blinked, as if he saw something he would rather leave unseen. "You have nothing to envy me for; and you are right, comparison is absurd," he said a little wistfully. "Yet you envy and compare. I'm blind, but my astral sight

is clear, that's why I come to you to-day. Can't we set things right between us? You don't feel antagonism as I feel it, perhaps—a cold, slimy beast that chokes our best endeavours. I'm feeling it now. I can see it coming from you. If I knew the reason the feeling would be killed—killed by the beginning of friendship. Man, we're all brothers; just one overgrown family, with family differences to adjust, and peculiarities to make allowance for. Have I done anything to offend you? I know nothing of boys and girls, it's so many years since I was young. Have I presumed upon my age in any way?"

No one, who was not sure of his position to its last inch, thought Dominick, would dare to speak with such humility; then his face grew red with wholesome shame. He kicked some ugly thoughts to the back of his mind, and met the sincere gaze openly. "I thought you were making the people at the Farm forget me," he said honestly; and felt that open confession is good for the soul sometimes.

The Duke cocked his bald head. "The people—not one person?"

"Two," said Dominick less honestly, with his eyes on the sea.

"I was afraid, you know," the Duke went on slowly; "because I'd heard things. Don't mind me; I couldn't help hearing. The vicar's wife—do you know her—yellow face, mouth full of evil speaking: dreadful woman! dreadful woman!—she hinted something. Does she always hint? And, of course, till I saw you for myself, and asked you outright, I've held my tongue. Yes"—he beamed mild triumph at his self-control—"I've held my tongue."

Dominick's breath came fast; it seemed as if

he signed away his right to Honor with a single word. Yet he had Evadne. Then a pang of unselfishness rent him; sudden distrust in self weighed down the scales. Worldly place apart, was he so sure his merits ranked above the Duke's? He looked at the innocent, patient old face, at the dim eyes watching him in utter faith in his honesty; and stood amazed at his own unworthiness.

"That's all right," he said firmly; "it's a village lie." As he spoke he knew he was forsworn, yet added it swiftly to the credit side of his account. At any rate, Honor cared nothing for him, that was very evident.

The Duke heaved a sigh of relief. "What a blessing!" he said simply. "You needn't be afraid of your place with them both. Roger Drury and I are old friends, but I haven't turned you out of their hearts; it was something else I feared. What hope could I have with Miss Honor"—in some surprise Dominick saw him lift his wide-awake as at some holy name—"if you stood before me there?" His pride took no account of his position; humility gave him no place for himself.

"I never stood there," said Dominick, and caught himself half wishing that he did. Yet the soreness of heart, the jealousy, and anger, were fading away; a sense of chivalry, crooked and mistimed, maybe, rose in their place. Honor was worthy of much; he would act the true brother to her, and help her all he knew.

The Duke looked up with a brighter smile, and replaced his battered hat. "The antagonistic feeling is gone," he cried with mild exultation. "I can see the rose-colour drifting from you to me. Don't you feel it?—it comes in lovely globes, self-lighted from within. I feel warm in it." He

stopped to rub his hands. "Oh, my dear boy, if you would be persuaded to leave off beef-steaks and cider, you would feel it too. All the same"—he looked vaguely disturbed for the moment—"the gift is a knife that cuts two ways. If I didn't feel the love, I shouldn't feel the hate, should I? I know there is no sun without a shadow; but if we lived in twilight, should we miss the sunshine as much as we should escape the darkness?" He pushed back his hat, and his lips moved wordlessly. "It's a question I can't answer," he said more cheerfully. "My stupid old brain gets into snarls and tangles; I confuse theory with practice, and do stupid things. I think little Heart of Gold could smooth them out. I call Miss Honor 'Heart of Gold,'" he added, as Dominick looked a polite enquiry. "Haven't you seen the may-weed, white-robed and golden-hearted, a field-flower as she is?"

Dominick saw Honor in a new light. 'Heart of Gold' had in it the ring of true romance. A man might fight for a heart of gold as much as for golden hair and big brown eyes. He felt within him he could fight for both.

"So it's all square now?" asked the Duke.

"Quite square." Dominick felt a foolish inclination to confess, but wisely checked it. He watched the radiant face and the dim blue eyes without a thought of laughter or incongruity; a spasm of self-reproach tore him, and kept him silent.

"I hope it isn't selfish to feel as happy as I feel now," said the Duke. "One forgets others as much in great happiness as in great grief. And selfishness is the unforgiveable sin, isn't it? When one forgets one is only a part, and thinks of oneself as a whole—how I'm babbling!—but I'm sure

you understand what I mean—one ought to be satisfied if the rest of the whole is happy. 'Whoso loseth his soul,' you know; there is a deep meaning in that, and I'm sure it refers to present happiness as well as to hell and heaven, and all the other states of being. I think one ought to be able to rejoice in personal sorrow if it lightens other burdens; but it's beyond me."

Dominick listened, envied, and held his tongue. Such mysteries were not for him; for who can lose his soul for the sake of another save he who has found it?

Something akin to the feeling turned him to the older man. "I wish you luck," he said. The Duke smiled. "Wish me God-speed," he answered quietly.

CHAPTER XXV.

DOMINICK went back to London stripped of some feathers. The process of plucking is, in its way, as unpleasant for man as for poultry, and it was not only Honor's hand which plucked him, but his own observation.

He and she had made up their quarrel by the dignified ignoring of its existence. Dominick had made approaches; Honor met him half way. Nothing was said. Afterwards, Dominick tormented himself by thinking something should have been said, and would have been said, had they stood to each other in their old position.

Once he had filled in all the detail of Honor's life; now, he could but own it, she seemed quite capable of filling in those details by herself. It was her own doing, and, therefore, marvellous in his eyes. He had become accustomed to the analysis of his own growth of mind, body, and estate, but he imagined Honor standing still, the same quiet, unseeing, uncritical Honor he had left to watch and wait for him while he went to London. Among all the changes at Norton, he found most change in Honor; surveying her, as he surveyed the rest, from a greater distance, so getting a broader view of her character, than when he was living every moment by her side. And he saw she was entirely sufficient for herself, even as

Mary had been; that no longer she thought of him, and of his judgment, in each question that came her way, but acted for herself without regard to him.

Such acknowledgment came hard to Dominick, even to himself; it was difficult for him to take his place in the background of her thoughts, doubly difficult to realize his position was filled by someone else. His had been a pervasive influence, almost unconscious, but always working; it was his no longer; he had to face it. And he faced it, half indignant, half afraid.

At the moment she seemed to shut him out of her life, so at that moment she seemed to enter his more definitely. When he tried to fill his mind with thoughts of Evadne, working hard to drive himself to the old extasies, then, for the first time, he found Honor intrusive. She haunted him surprisingly, she met him at every turn. Instead of building cottages for Evadne, he found himself speculating on Honor's future—that half-fine, half-pathetic future, when she would reign as duchess over two-thirds of Norton and the surrounding neighbourhood. The fancy biassed him; he posed her differently. Dominick was really more in love with Love than with Evadne; and Honor's romance was opportune. He felt like a dispossessed but loyal prince; one bound to chivalrous service, but to one that was something hard.

He felt, also, that Honor had robbed him of some right—robbed, innocently enough, but unmistakeably; that she had taken from him the right of his thoughts regarding her; that his mind must run to hers no longer in the pride of each new thought or new discovery. No longer could she follow the thread of his pursuits, working in his footsteps, often verifying or disproving some

special theory; never educational nor dogmatic, simply working because the work was his, and so she loved it.

Dominick drew back his thoughts with a guilty start, then laughed at himself and his vanity. The love of a sister, poor tepid stationary emotion, long-lasting, because there were no thrills to wear out its life, no hungry passions to tear it to threads. Just like Honor, cool, impassionate, with a clear sight, and no bandage bound over her eyes. And the heart in him leaped up red-hot, with the thought of love as he knew it; an emotion insidious in its strength, rending, tearing, burning with unquiet fire; always questioning, never at rest; always wavering between the shores of hope and despair. Such love that lifts a man to the kingdom of heaven, or casts him into the bottomless pit; not the poor, mid-way make-shift, which lasts just as long as its earthly parent, but the living force burning for all eternity, white flame in heaven, or scarlet fire in hell.

Emotion stirred in Dominick, stirred to a degree unfathomed by himself, though he was in the habit of taking himself to pieces and seeing how his wheels went round. He was dimly conscious of imperative forces making their strength known; strong needs, subtle hints, which shadowed stronger passions; queer thrills, as though something other than himself played tunes upon his heart-strings; or, as if he heard through his own heart-throbs the love of all the world. Ready memory pictured the procession of devout and sorrowful loves of all climes and ages, and Dominick's heart thrilled responsive to the glory of West and East in their passion and their pain.

He pulled down the "Defence of Guinevere," and read it through. It made him think of Mary, of

himself. Suppose the two cloths of destiny had been outspread for him, and he had chosen for his portion—hell? Then thrilled and burnt with the magic of the song, thrilling and burning through the words for the beauty that was his, the beauty he must claim as his own, through his intense desire. Evadne's heart lay in his hands. He laid his thin, strong fingers on his desk, and idly compared them with the small, pink palms that, in their turn, held his destiny. Evadne's hands were so characteristic of herself—dainty, delicately sensuous—with soft, warm palms and incurved fingers; fingers which would hold the things given to their keeping.

Dominick moved restlessly up and down the room; then flung his windows open wide. The night felt stifling. He leaned out, looking through the gloaming down to the lamp-post in the middle of the court. It was as though he saw another moon below him, burning whitely in a sea of darkness. Two black cats crept furtively across the court-yard, keeping out of range of the lamp. He watched them slip by like other shadows; then looked beyond the chimney-pots to the place where the genuine moon was sailing in the smoky sky. His thoughts were girdling all worlds, while his eyes took in the stream of figures passing the entrance gate. By and by, the Kreutzer Sonata began in the room below; Dominick listened, as though he heard again the "Defence of Guinevere." The music—he was strictly unmusical—seemed to set each nerve in his body quivering; to make him conscious of that body, as though each nerve were plucked to pain. He had never felt so hot in his life, some fever came to him with the harmonies; he leaned yet further out, felt suddenly giddy, limp, and weak.

He felt his pulse, without knowledge, or discretion, simply because he felt so unlike his ordinary self. It was racing under the thin tense skin. Love burnt in him like fever. He sent his heart through the night spaces in search of Evadne, feeling as if such love must burn its way unerringly to her. And, instead, the vision came to him of Honor. Honor, among the box and laurel alleys, with the moonlight on her face, and her grave eyes looking unafraid on the future that awaited her. Something in Dominick then winged its way to that contrasting stillness—white moon, white gown, and silvered grass; and something cried through the tumult of his night to the peace that overshadowed her.

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When he awoke from his dream it was with one thought clearly defined, almost as if it had been whispered to him by the night breeze in the laurels. He must make his way straight with Evadne's people; as he stood, his reticence seemed cowardly and mean. It was wonderful how the resolution stilled him, made him strong; yet, at the same time, sent through him a foreboding sadness, as if he bound himself irrevocably by his act.

Though the clock was striking twelve, and the outer gates were closing, he turned at once to his desk, afraid lest the hour of grace should slip away and find him wanting. He sent an urgent letter to the lady of his vows, demanding leave to open his mouth, with certain threats. It was the sanest letter he had ever sent her in its honesty. He addressed it, as usual, to a stationer's, the only address he knew. He felt a little glow of triumph as he dropped it in the box. Evadne and he could stand without the weight of titles. Love

was enough. He wrote out his full heart to her, while his half-conscious inner self told him how Honor would appreciate the straight words, and the delicacy of the sentiment. He was anxious to act honestly, all the more because he suspected the truth of his feelings; also, he measured swords mentally with the Duke; the old man was so oddly honourable.

But as Dominick took the night-key of the iron gates, crossed the lonely street, and dropped his letter in the pillar-box at the corner, it was to Honor that he sent his thought. "I believe she would think it right," he said, knowing Honor's predilection for honest courses. And then he went back, climbed up the dark stairs, where one feeble gas-jet sulked in its efforts to light all the stair-case, found the key-hole with some trouble, and retired to bed with a quiet conscience. His dreams that night were more of Honor than of Evadne.

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He was considerably surprised to find no notice taken of his appeal; a disconcerting silence was his sole reward. After seven miserable days at the Museum, he followed the letter to the stationer's shop—a dingy little place enough, bow-windowed, with sealing-wax and string behind the glass, and wired-in posters leaning against the wall. Dominick noticed the pink and green and primrose news-bills, heavily smudged with startling head-lines; the usual sensational divorce, the mysterious murder, the brilliant forgery; remembered that they gave a man something over his ha'porth of sensation; went in, and demanded news.

No Miss Evadne Smith had called for any letters; Miss Evadne Smith hadn't been for any letters

lately. They had no right to give her real address, even if they knew it—which they didn't. Was there anything else the gentleman might want? Dominick bought the first magazine to hand, growled something like an apology, brushed dismally against the paper-racks with their waving sheets of news, and slouched out of the door with vague apprehension in his heart.

Evadne had never given the name of her shop, nor its whereabouts; nor had Dominick the necessary lack of taste to ask her. The shop was openly mentioned only once between them; it was not celebrated enough to confer distinction on its employées.

Dominick went back to his flat, and received, discourteously, an invitation to go to a "Hall" with Jaikes. Jaikes withdrew, accompanying his departure with winged words.

A "Post Office Directory" yielded up the Smiths of Lower Tooting in their legions, and, counting them, Dominick abstained from direct attack. He had vague thoughts of agony columns, but no knowledge of Evadne's taste in journalism. He recalled her speech the day they went to Hampton Court; she was right, it was extraordinary how little each knew of the other; amazing when he considered the relationship in which they stood. But she might have called for his letter; might have written; there were so many things she might have done if she had given him a thought. Perhaps she was merely trying him; distrustful of him with the "Artemis-girl"; he grew angry at the notion, but his conscience was clear. She might have known him better, he said to himself, when, like many another, he found he had to wait a woman's will, with such patience as he might.

Meanwhile Evadne took an easy opportunity of

unshackling herself from Dominick. If that occurred which she devoutly prayed might happen, then she had followed the sage advice, and was comfortably off with an out-worn love before she was on with a newer, truer one. If the new love came to nought—a contingency she eyed with dread—there remained to her Dominick, and sweet unconsciousness that he had written. So she gave up calling for her letters, and followed her fortunes, and those of her brave engineer, into Cornwall, where she spent a fortnight with a complacently blind-eyed companion. Peter Rudd seemed delighted to welcome her when they met by happy chance on the black cliffs of Tintagel, and made himself most agreeable to her during her well-earned holiday, and incidentally did a little engineering on his own account. His prospects had improved beyond recognition.

But Dominick tasted the bitters of solitude among a crowd; the very loneliest of lives, which set him sighing for companionship, just as he had sighed for solitude when friends oppressed him with their company. He got again into brooding ways, and, as is natural with the solitary, found himself expand into huge proportions the more he watched and weighed it, till all the sorrows, injustices, and hardships of the world lay like a burden on his impatient shoulders. He resented, not only his life, but the fact of living; resented it as a man resents arbitrary injustice. He seemed to have no choice; yet he could not do otherwise than struggle impotently with his fate, watching it beckon him, defying with his mind, while he obeyed its behests.

Solitude was bad for Dominick, as it is bad for the weak. Of all men, he most wanted a backer, a confidant, some one to reassure him in his hour of self-doubt; also—though this was less realizable

—to pull him down by his coat-tails when he soared too high. Honor was lost—shut out of his life; shut out, partly by himself, partly by the upgrowth of her ambitions in a new direction. Dr. Drury was too old, and, besides, had stood too long in the light of a teacher, for ready confidences. Confidences with an older man are perilously kin to asking advice; remains only the doubtful pleasure of neglecting it. Confidences with Jaikes, or Hubbard, or Fielding would be shouting ones sorrows in the ears of a clown. It would breed a crop of indifferent Saxon jokes at his Celtic expense. Dominick writhed as he thought of it, and sighed for an ideal sister.

The ideal sister always belongs to another man, asks nothing, expects nothing, argues nothing, but is possessed of sympathetic and receptive ears. Dominick pined for her presence. He seemed wonderfully alone in the world, and the more he brooded on his loneliness, the more he saw its injustice, and the louder seemed the mocking laughter of his gods.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MAN is not born to live alone, because loneliness induces brooding, and brooding breeds bad work, if it does not plant the root of all evil, idleness itself. Dominick's new and revised edition of the "Imram Brain" progressed but slowly; the larger part of the work was scored out as inadmissible, wrongly modelled from the first. He was drawing near that fatal line when self argues with self that nothing matters; indifference began to stretch out chill hands toward him, numbing both heart and brain.

Evadne, or the ideal she symbolized, laid a gess upon him far weightier than any laid down in the "Book of Rights." She restricted his powers, his concentration, and laid hands on the larger half of his reverence. Losing an ideal meant more to Celtic Dominick than it means to ordinary boys, because ordinary boys are not given to the setting up of images—Dominick's was more brazen than he understood—while Dominick's heart was always aflame for one god or another. He had no sense of duty to help him through his work unless he took an interest in it. That kind of boy often does excellently, because he is keenly interested in many subjects; but he is liable to obsessions of odd kinds, and then his work suffers.

There were small unpleasantnesses with his Chief, and curt warnings—all the curter because the great man knew the possibilities in the subordinate, and compared them with the late impoverished performance. It was Dominick's first experience of the "official wigging;" he was crushed, but not humbled. He suffered in a grand silence, and knew he was a martyr.

Other men said they always knew he could not stay the course; it was unwise to simulate enthusiasm at the beginning of a job, as it led to great and quite unrealizable expectations. Dominick was slacking off, not suffering in their eyes. His zeal for work after hours had materially diminished, and his odd moments were no longer spent in getting glimpses of other departments, an enthusiasm which had been admirably evident during his first year.

With his indignant anxiety about Evadne came other troubles to his door. It seemed to Dominick that the affairs of this world are never of an equal balance. Joy and sorrow breed other joys and sorrows; they seem to have a collective instinct, gathering each to itself after its kind. When Dominick was happy, his eye was single, his whole body full of light; he used his happiness, resenting the thought that misery lived anywhere. He expanded, his nature drew in a finer sustenance for its support. Sorrow shrank him, shrivelled up the growing soul within him, sent him staring into outer darkness, drove him in search of other misery. With joy he touched heaven; sorrow drove him to the edge of the pit. He stared down into the unfathomable depths, memory painting pictures for him, conscience calling him a coward, legends threatening him with the fate of cowards in the Hela pool. Dominick turned round and round

on himself, and in and in on himself, entangling himself in deadly webs. The agony to find himself was not the least of his woes.

Some men agonize for the power of self-expression; others for the finding of self. Through such knowledge they seek blindly for the "kingship of the heavens," the control of the force within themselves, their assurance of salvation. Perhaps much of the egoism assigned to hysteria is really but the search for the soul; for the way of liberation and the "ceasing of the wheel."

Dominick had made God in his own image long enough; and, unconsciously, in his search for the self that eluded him, he sought for something beyond his own shifting personalities in the unity of the ideal.

Dominick hunted himself through the mazes of his being; saw others apparently able to find or lose themselves at will, able to act without his own deadly sense of unreality, stronger, saner men for the knowledge that he lacked. It was Dominick's conviction of sin, but he had no means of conversion ready to his hand.

He was not real; he knew he was not real. He was hunting for an evasive reality, hunting ever within himself; not learning the wide lessons which were open to him, nor withdrawing his mind from the self that escaped him, but pursuing himself through every twist and turn of his nature. He wanted to make sure of himself for himself, grasp his immortality before his time. Dominick asked great gifts of his gods. And the gods, shades of the shadows, laughed or slept unheeding on their clouds.

Long ago, he remembered, in the days when he might own his ignorance and question openly, he had discussed with Dr. Drury and with Honor the

gift most to be desired in this life. "Love," said Honor, meaning the gift of bestowal. "Power," said Dominick, with a mental eye upon the kingdoms of this world; and "Faith," said Dr. Drury, for from beginning to end it is that which removes mountains and casts them into the sea, comprehending in itself much of the Love and all the Power coveted by Honor and by Dominick. And Dominick's power was stripped from off him, even as his love had flown, rainbow-winged, into the far away. Remained to him nothing, not even his naked self.

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When he came back from the Museum one rainy night, and shook the drops from his umbrella over the banisters as he ran up the staircase, he found a letter from Mary waiting in his letter-box. He turned it over in his wet, cold hands. There was not much in it, this his second letter from his sister. Mary walked consistently in her devious ways. She ignored the past with a noble oblivion, and said she should call and see him next Saturday. There was no suggestion that he might be otherwise engaged.

It was Mary all over, but Dominick was mainly concerned as to the fitting greeting for her. It seemed so banal to provide tea. Equally impossible to order white sheets and candles; most out of place to laugh or weep, to reproach or to keep silence. The problem diverted his mind from Evadne for the rest of the week. He was nervously uneasy, afraid and ashamed, and driven to trust to his familiar spirit for fitting action when the time came.

The time came after its fashion, close and heavy as October in London knows how to be. The

overcast sky had cleared to a bold Japanesque cloud-study of flying scarlet cranes; the new-built flats lost their angles, chamfered by the violet mist; up above the chimney-pots hung the silver sickle of the crescent moon. Dominick approved the design, opened his window, and shook up the cushions of his sofa. Then sat and waited till he heard the rattle of a cab in the courtyard; sprang up, and of set purpose switched off the electric light. His familiar spirit suggested that it would be easier to meet the sinner in the dark.

And with the patter of light shoes on the staircase came the horrible knowledge that she was a sinner; it seemed as if realization ran before her open-mouthed, shouting to Dominick the meaning of it all, crying out her doings from the housetops; as if, up till this hour, he had not known, nor understood; as if now he shared the knowledge and the shame.

Some instinct bade him leave the door of his flat ajar; Mary should find it open to her. Dominick stood in his darkened little room, driving his hands into his pockets, looking with beating heart through the growing darkness, emotions whirling unsorted and unsortable within. It was Mary's voice that called him back to earth: "My word! what a lot of stairs!" she said, and her voice was the full, untroubled voice of the lost Mary of long years.

He could not speak, could only dumbly hold out his hands. Mary patted his shoulder, and kissed him lightly on the cheek. The caress evoked the strangest sensations, strangest memories; he could not return it.

"It's too dark to see how you've grown," said Mary, with a little excited laugh. "Where are the lights?"

Dominick moved in silence, and flooded the little room with the inquisitive glare of electricity. "The sort of thing to show up one's wrinkles," as Mary said, and turned her face to the light to prove her own immunity. Then threw off an expensive coat, and sat down on Dominick's sofa. She was well dressed, and, as Dominick saw with a thankful heart-beat, showed no trade mark. She was neither massaged nor conspicuously manicured; she looked fresh, healthy and natural, to Dominick's surprise. Then he accused himself in the same breath of infinite brutality. The analytic mind often surprises its owner; it surprised Dominick, and made him red with shame.

"How you've lost your tongue!" said Mary. She seemed quite without embarrassment, apparently found the situation piquant. "I should have thought you'd have had lots to talk about."

Dominick said nothing. He was cruelly aware of his lack of poise, as cruelly unable to attain it.

"You're glad to see me, aren't you, Dominick?" said Mary, with a hint of surprise.

"Of course I'm glad." Dominick's voice was rather hoarse; he cleared his throat.

Mary patted the sofa. "Then sit down like a Christian and talk sense." She looked at him shrewdly. "I expect you've got it in your silly boy's head to say things you'd better not. We'll take everything as read; it simplifies matters. Now, how do you like the Museum, and what made you take up such a job?"

Dominick explained briefly. He seemed talking to a stranger, with an immortally familiar voice. He himself seemed strange; the real Dominick was far away, perhaps playing on the shore at Norton, waiting to go home to supper across the brown

marshes in the fading light. It seemed to one centre of his being to be a moment fraught with mighty possibilities, to hold so much in the compass of its sphere. To another, it was sordid, poverty stricken, a thing of indifference. And the self that eluded Dominick was swayed and battered between divergent bits of self, while hosts of unsuspected selves looked on and appraised the worth of his analysis.

"Oh! if Dr. Drury thought it good enough for you," said Mary, "I suppose it's all right. I wish you had gone to college though."

"I took my B.A. in London." How old and composed his voice sounded to himself! Was it the same voice that acclaimed his success three little years ago? He realized he had aged enormously in the interval.

"London!" echoed Mary, with a little shrug of her shoulders. "I meant Oxford or Cambridge. Dr. Drury was a Cambridge man."

"I've done well enough," said Dominick shortly, and refrained from explaining that he had outstripped three Cambridge and five Oxford men before the Civil Service Commissioners. The advantage was not due to London, but to Irish, which he had studied and they had not.

"Well enough! I wanted you to do *so* well." Mary's voice was wistful. "I hoped so much for you, old boy."

Once again Dominick held his peace. Small use to explain to Mary that her own example was more potent than her hopes. "I wanted you to make a name in the world," pursued Mary, and smoothed the delicate embroidery on her dress. "The Blakes are a good family."

"Very good," responded Dominick, without ironical intention.

"Which reminds me"—Mary sat up and looked severe, the supple body yielding its curves to the impulse of the mind—"you oughtn't to go about with a girl like the one you took to Hampton; not in daylight, at any rate. You remember—I was in a car that broke down there? She's not your sort."

"I think we'll leave her out of the discussion, please," said Dominick.

Mary patted him under the chin with a little unpleasantly familiar gesture. "I want you to get on," she said. "Of course, a boy of your age is just the sort to—well, to get taken in—but we must look higher for you. Your brains are as valuable as your looks. I suppose you've often been told what a pretty boy you are? And your brains are as improved, aren't they? You owe Dr. Drury something for that. By the way, once I thought about that Drury child for you. Would she be good enough, do you think?"

"She is going to marry the new Duke of Northwyk," said Dominick, and it seemed as though he set the seal on the marriage bond by his words.

Mary turned red, then pale, and the light of a sudden anger burned in her blue eyes. She was overpoweringly envious. "That chit!" she cried, in the words and almost in the accent of Mrs. Stone. "A little plainish dowdy thing like that—never been out of Norton all her days—and to pick up such a catch——"

"Mary, don't," said Dominick's stifled voice. He felt immeasurably degraded by her words, immeasurably lowered by her tone. A faint reflection of her thoughts had been his thoughts; was the mind-kinship between them so petty and so mean?

But Mary was silent from other emotions than awe. "I wonder how she managed it?" she said

at last, with a deep-drawn breath. In her ears it sounded inconceivable that any good thing could happen to any dweller in Norton-by-the-Sea.

"What luck some people have!" she said finally; and cast her eyes over her own rather dingy and inglorious career, and cursed her fortune. Wry-grained spinner of evil threads!

"It's a fair-sized piece of news," she added, as a postscript. "No one would have guessed that little thing could have had it in her."

Dominick kicked at a tuft in the carpet. The words grated on him, made him feel hot and sore; also, put Mary farther than ever from her old place. It was as though he looked down a precipice, and realized the depth of her fall; realizing, also, through some unknown agency, the same potentialities within himself.

All unaware, Mary went on: "Funny thing to happen at Norton, of all places in the world! It seemed as if nothing ever moved in that place. They wanted something to wake 'em up. Perhaps they got it, too! I suppose you were too young to hear—much?" her one oblique reference to herself, which Dominick ignored. Perhaps she noticed it, and knew the intention of his silence. She put out her hand for her coat, and smoothed down the fur reflectively.

"I've wanted to see you for a long time," she said. "Ever since I knew you were up in this dingy old place. All places are pretty much alike, aren't they? London seems awfully tame when you've lived in it a year or two. Things are so narrow, aren't they? No one seems to be able to find out anything new, or worth the doing. I'm sure I try hard enough, and can't. And abroad—well, I don't care much for foreign places, though yachting isn't bad. I've been everywhere pretty

well, and seen most things. I expect one needs a special training to see properly, don't you ?—like a painter." She spoke without restraint, but Dominick felt cold. "It must make things interesting if one can see. I can't; I've never had a chance. I only want to live and have a good time. I'm having it." She looked at her unresponsive brother, who wore a set face of unintelligence. "And, old boy, you won't take it wrong, will you ? I'd be awfully pleased to have you come and see me just when you like—you know that, don't you ?—but" —her level eyes met Dominick's unashamed—"I have other people than myself to consider."

Dominick said nothing; in crises such as these he felt dumb.

"So we must say good-bye to each other for the present, and each go our own road," said Mary. "By and by things may be different, and we shall come across each other. But if you ever think of changing your profession, mind you let me know. I might help you—in finance, for instance." Her eyes lighted up with a new gleam. "I'm awfully lucky in my investments," she added; "and what a power money is! I never knew it when I was a girl. Things turn to money when I touch them. I wish you'd think about changing; luck so often runs in families."

"I'm quite satisfied where I am," said Dominick, and neither felt thankful nor uttered thanks.

"Then I'll be toddling. If I find I can come and see you again, I'll let you know. But I can't have you running in and out to see me, you understand; write as often as you please. Give me a lift into my coat; there's a good boy."

He held her coat; she slipped her arms in the sleeves with the same well-remembered swing of her body, a pose much admired by Murray in

bygone days, turned to Dominick, and presented him with her cheek.

"Good-bye, dear," she said. He felt something pushed into his hand, a quick kiss, and Mary was gone. Gone utterly out of his life, he felt it.

When he looked at his little parcel, he found in it a select assortment of bank-notes, totalling a hundred pounds, a welcome windfall in the present state of his exchequer. But it gave Dominick his first pleasurable feeling to tear each note in many pieces, and throw those pieces in the fire. Refuse the notes he could not; return them he could not, through fear of heaping shame on Mary. But there were certain speculations of hers into which he could not enter to his weal.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It was not long before the Duke put his fortunes to the touch; in fact, just about the time when Mary went home to eat her heart out with envy. That such good things could happen to an unenterprising girl was past all whooping. Mary thought but rarely of the workings of the force called Providence, but she was swift in her acknowledgment that its ways are past finding out. A Duke was a mighty thing to Mary, though so horribly insignificant to himself. She watched in fancy his triumphal procession from strength to strength; he tried on and discarded three new ties in succession before resolving to rely on his love and his unadorned ugliness.

He was anxious with the childishness of age to make sure of Honor for himself. Ordinary pleasures, motor rides, jewels, and such things, seemed to lay no spell upon her, and when once he spoke of diamonds, instancing some historical treasures of his House, she had been more interested in the legends than alive to the value of the gems. She needed subtler wooing, or a straight question, but no bribery; for she knew herself, as Dominick had never known her to her depths.

To this end the Duke devised pageants in her honour. In her name, meetly veiled under symbols,

he reconsecrated Maid's Meadow with due pomp and ceremony, adopting various suggestions from various sources for the furtherance of the scheme He took Braithwaite's advice, and included choric dancing, and a representation, in tableaux, of the conversion of the Pagan Danes; his own more modest programme was hooted into limbo by energetic boys.

"As far as I understand your plan, Duke," Braithwaite said scholastically, "these pageants are to hit the public in the eye; wake 'em up a bit, you know." In spite of his speech, something in the scheme, something of its idyllicism appealed to Oxford-bred Braithwaite, and he condescended to detail.

The Duke listened attentively, as he listened to all boys; he knew youth waited its turn to be served by age, and his was no grudging service. He listened while Braithwaite read out a gallant list of old-time ceremonies, and felt a sense of gratitude out of all proportion for the slender service done him; he was so childishly eager for interest in his scheme.

"I'll write a cheque and leave you to arrange details," said the Duke. His Scottish caution gave way before the urgency of his position; he had no bump of organization, but he knew that to organize a thing properly costs something, usually a great deal.

"We're like new people, tryin' to get into society by doin' a big thing," said Braithwaite to his colleague, as they whistled over the magnitude of the cheque. "Looks ostentatious, don't it? I wonder what the Boss has up his sleeve?"

Then he applied his mind to the work in hand, improving the original programme out of knowledge by the addition of abnormal instruments of music—

crwth, sackbut and psaltery—with speakers qualified to sing in tones and demi-tones to the notes of dulcimers. Explanatory speeches were negatived by wiser youth; the appeal was all to the eye, with but a slender tax on the imagination. He and Coote, his ardent colleague, journeyed up to town in search of suitable material; interviewed with great discretion some more or less celebrated folk, not averse from odd jobs; consulted some ex-presidents of the O.U.D.C. and the A.D.C. with regard to scenic effects in a limited space, and returned to Norton primed with useful knowledge, and in the tempers of those who have employed their time in pleasantness.

The Duke was bewildered, but agreeable. The plan was acquiring larger proportions than those designed by his more modest self. It seemed to him that the religious feeling might be lost under the bushel of properties. "Don't forget the religious aspect," he implored Braithwaite. "It isn't a masque, you know; it's a service of consecration;" and he rubbed his poor puzzled head when Braithwaite assured him faith was stimulated more by sight than by prayers. The gigantic programme called it a "pageant," and the Duke was not sure he wanted a pageant so much as a simple and devout ceremony, impressive only by the faith which gave it birth. Then argued humbly with himself that the young must know better than their elders the things that pleased their sight, fed their imagination, and stimulated their faith.

He took little heed of the garden-party aspect of the proceedings. Coote and Braithwaite were much more up in such things; but he wasted hours in wandering over every inch of the field, turning over the soil with his spud; unfurling his net at each belated butterfly; or planting, here and there, quite

at the wrong season, the flowers that seemed to him to suit the sanctity of the place.

He was dreadfully in the way of the carpenters and joiners, and other useful people, prepared to transform Maid's Meadow into an open-air theatre. He stood rapt with his eyes on the grass, while busy men evaded him with fir-poles; or he wandered about, entangling himself in the meshes of tape-measures, or absently kicking over the levels placed at intervals for reference. He brought Honor and Dr. Drury to admire the prospect, while carpenters cursed him freely below their hurried breath. Braithwaite, who felt himself responsible for the success or failure of the whole thing, urged Coote to waylay his superior and lock him up, or otherwise dispose of him till the place was ready.

The Duke stood serene as ever, where the stage was in process of erection, describing at great length the things that should be done. "The Maid appeared, you know, among a cloud of butterflies," he said eagerly to Honor. "Blue and white butterflies, Braithwaite. This is most important; this must be seen to; don't forget it."

Braithwaite took note, for the fifth time, in his red-bound memorandum book. "They must have meant something," said the Duke wisely, with his eyes brightening. "Perhaps they symbolized the souls of the redeemed—do you think they did, Drury?" Dr. Drury was understood to say he had no idea what redeemed souls looked like, while he moved rather quickly from the neighbourhood of an enraged foreman. It was Honor who seemed to understand they were not wanted.

"Aren't we in the way?" she said to Braithwaite. "You seem to have a lot to do, and I expect we're interrupting."

Braithwaite's sleek hair was ruffled with agita-

tion. "Miss Drury, if you will undertake to get the Duke out of the way, the stage could be up in an hour or two. As it is, it's impossible, and we have the rehearsal to-night. Heavens! there he is again, nearly through the Maid's window. Oh! get him away somewhere, and we shall bless you for ever." He was terribly agitated, the composure of Oxford had departed from him.

Honor turned directly to the Duke. "Do you know," she said in her straightforward way, "that if you want the Meadow to be ready in time for to-morrow, you ought to remove father and me by main force?"

The Duke looked at her quickly. "Eh? I never thought about interrupting the work. Are we interrupting the work, Braithwaite? Why didn't you say so before?"

"Perhaps standing where the stage is going to be hardly hastens matters," put in Dr. Drury, who had lately suffered two or three accidental knocks from pole-ends. "If—oh, quite so! my fault entirely! Bob, if I'm to leave this place alive, I'd better do it immediately."

Approbation painted itself on every face. The Duke shook his head. "Oh, men," he said, with gentle, patient reproach, "haven't I begged you a hundred times to tell me what you really wish? Why aren't you honest? Braithwaite, why didn't you tell me I was in the way?"

"Well, your Grace," Braithwaite answered, with flurried respect, "we knew the interest you take in the matter; but, naturally, experts get on faster by themselves."

"And I'm interfering," the Duke said sadly, "and no one is brave enough to tell me so, or that they prefer my room to my company." His trouble was such that he forgot to move from the place.

A load of planks supplied a sudden hint; they were shot down abruptly in the foreground.

"Well, good-bye, Duke," said Honor, holding out her hand. "See! there's the flooring for the stage, and they want this place. It will look lovely when it's done, if we all go away and let them do it."

"That's common-sense," said the Duke; "and you think I'd better go away and not come back till it's finished?" Everyone but Honor saw the way he waited on her words.

"Of course," she answered promptly.

"Come along then, Roger," said the Duke, and with old-fashioned courtesy gave Honor his arm. She had to stoop to take it, but she led him out of the meadow. Braithwaite took off his cap to the vanishing figures. "Her Grace will drill the old boy into something in time," he said to himself, and watched the eager army of workmen fling themselves on their work with hungry zeal induced by thought of signed contracts.

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The Duke had sighed with gratitude when he saw the last of his distinguished guests betake themselves to their various equipages, and the medley of cars and carriages had vanished from his gates—this one, that one, and the rest, departing with a stupefied sense of wonder at all that they had seen or heard, and a confused idea that they had seen a pastoral play without much plot or dialogue. The curious dances which complicated the action might be in vogue next year, for all they knew; but they sincerely hoped the next time they were bidden to a similar feast, it would not be in October, when thin shoes were out of place on rough meadowland. "Of course, I thought it would have been indoors," was the shivering comment of the gratified

guests. "I wonder what on earth they thought of it all," said Dr. Drury to Honor, while the Duke was mainly anxious as to what his Maid thought of it all, and, unfortunately, she and her father left before he could hear their opinions.

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The following day brought the Duke, when Dr. Drury was away in town, giving Dominick a look, and rubbing a little rust off his own mind at a meeting. Honor Drury was in the garden, and Pierre suggested summoning her, if the Duke preferred it.

The Duke was an open-air person, more himself under the open sky. He said he would go and look for Honor, and toddled down the badly whitened steps. As he went, his dim eyes noticed many things to which before he had been blind. It seemed as if he were disconcertingly observant, agitating himself with a thousand new impressions. His astral body was anything but serene, though he quieted it with such charms and mantras as he knew.

By and by, through a green archway, he caught sight of Honor in a little hedged-in garden, digging away with all her might. She never chopped a worm in two with reckless spade, but was tender even to the weeds. The earth looked brown and good; a light mist hung in the air, through which the trees rustled drily. Smike, watching the proceedings, cocked his sharp ears and twitched his whiskers when the Duke drew near.

"Father will be sorry he's away," said Honor, as they shook hands.

The Duke was less responsive than usual; he did not echo her tone. "You're digging," he said, rather obviously.

"As you see. But you don't know how tough some of the weed-roots are." She stuck her spade edgewise into the upturned earth.

"Do you know why they're tough?" asked the Duke, with his eyes on the unbroken ground.

Honor laughed a little. "I suppose, because they feel they have a right to be there, and resent being moved," she answered. "I never thought of it before."

"They symbolise the power of will," said the Duke solemnly. "One learns more from weeds than from flowers; much more. Sometimes I wonder"—here he cocked a speculative eye on the distant blue of the coppice—"if, after all, the flowers are not the mistakes, and the weeds the grace of God. Sown in us naturally, you see, not grown by our own energy."

Honor followed the thought at some distance. "Perhaps weeds are undeveloped virtues, and flowers developed ones," she said, at last. "So many flowers are only cultivated weeds, aren't they?"

The Duke nodded. "I like weeds," he said briskly. "I hate to see them grubbed up and thrown away to die on a rubbish heap. So much force wasted, so much power of life destroyed. I would nurture them for their resurrection into the full beauty and perfume of a flower, and love them all the more for ever having been weeds." His eyes shone; there was a certain force in his simplicity, in his love of all created things. "You have favourite flowers?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, of course. Pansies, I think, and lavender. I'm digging up this ground to make a new lavender bed."

"Pansies for thoughts," said the Duke. "Funny things, thoughts; come and go without one's will,

don't they? Do you ever think of me, I wonder?"

"Of course I do," said Honor honestly.

The Duke swung an aged pair of gloves in his hand; he seemed unaccountably embarrassed. He turned his back on her. "I suppose you couldn't tell me what you think of me?" he asked.

"It's rather difficult," said Honor.

They went out between the laurel hedges, into more open ground. The Duke expanded his chest. "I wish you would try," he said.

"But I can't. It would be analyzing you to your face, and I never weighed and measured you very carefully. One can't one's friends."

"You look on me as a friend, then?" the Duke said, quite quickly.

"Of course we do." In her turn, Honor began to feel a vague embarrassment, more from his manner than from his words. But she was too direct herself to be suspicious; embarrassment never reached that stage.

"What kind of friend?"

"A good one, I hope," said Honor.

"And how would you define a good friend?"

"Oh, Duke, I see now that you were a lawyer," said Honor, fencing desperately.

"But I want to know; I really want to know." The quick aside followed, breathed to the receptive trees: "It's harder than I thought; harder than I thought."

"One whom you could trust," said Honor slowly, meaning every word.

"And you feel that you could trust me? Queer that, very queer that. I don't seem a stupid old babbler to you then, or you couldn't trust me, could you? Do you get fond of your friends, I wonder?"

Honor hoped this might be taken for an aside.

Dominick's silly suspicions crossed her mind for a moment, and at the thought she blushed. Then, girl-like for once, looked for covert, with a sudden measurement of the distance between herself and the house.

She met the Duke's eyes with her own truthful grey ones. Like Dominick, he noticed her eyelashes for the first time; also, the beauty of the eyes. "Do you?" he jerked out abruptly.

"Yes," she said.

"But does that mean you could love them?" asked the Duke.

It was really close quarters. "I don't think it is the same thing," said Honor truthfully, and kept her eyes unflinchingly on his.

"You couldn't make a difference in favour of one of them?"

Honor shook her head; then thought of Dominick, and confessed it in her risen colour. The Duke watched it glow through the transparent skin, and his heart beat more quickly. He came nearer with uncertain feet; they walked with the width of the path between them, thanks to his wandering ways. A vagrant scent of mignonette drifted from some hidden flowers, like some secret sweet encouragement. "Could you think of me not as a friend for a little time, I wonder?" he said simply, with an innocent guile.

"I would rather think of you as a friend, please," Honor answered in some haste and fear; "much, much rather."

"If you thought for a long time, and tried very hard, you couldn't manage to think of me as a husband, could you?" asked the Duke, and stood quite still and stared at her. He looked pitiably anxious.

"Oh, I wish I could!" said Honor, and no more.

The pity in her voice rang true; the poor Duke felt his eyes grow moist; he saw the roots of her, no thought of self, simple pity for him. And seeing it made the loss of her still harder.

"I was afraid you couldn't," he said humbly. Honor's eyes watched him, asking pardon and expressing pity in one straight look. The Duke walked ahead for a few minutes, then turned back and faced her once again. "Is it impossible?" he said. "You can't tell how I've needed you—how I love you, little Heart of Gold!"

"I wish you didn't," said Honor miserably. She did not say she knew her own unworthiness, because that thought did not occur to her; she was thinking solely of him.

"That wouldn't make it any better," said the Duke. "You happen to be lovable, you know; and I wonder everyone doesn't see it. Blind eyes, blind eyes, what a lot of blind eyes there are about the world! And you will always stand to one old man as a true heart, and a sweet heart, though it can't be in the relationship I was silly enough to hope."

So Honor saw depart from her that golden opportunity which filled Mary's mind with such bitter envy. She watched it go with slow, difficult tears in her eyes, sorrow for the man who asked her for the love she no longer had to give.

They walked in silence through the laurel alley toward the house. Now and again he looked round to see if she came with him; now and again she wondered if it were best to follow, or to slip away. She was not long left in doubt. "I believe your father guessed," said the Duke abruptly.

"No one else will," answered Honor, and prayed Heaven to guard a certain ducal tongue, so apt to run at its own indiscretion.

"And we are friends?" he said rather wistfully,

yet asking for the stone himself, instead of the bread of love.

"You know how I value your friendship," answered Honor, and thought how unselfish he was.

"And if you alter your mind, you'll let me know?" the Duke said, stopping on the terrace.

"I can't alter," said Honor, with something in her voice that told more than she knew,

"God bless you, my dear," he said gravely, "and keep you as true to yourself always as you are now." He took off his wide-awake, and walked away, afraid lest his astral eyesight should betray him into knowledge of another's secret. And his honest old heart was fuller of her suffering than of his own.

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"And did you discuss the Maid and the performance at length?" asked Dr. Drury on his return. "What a mercy I was out of the way, and wasn't called on for criticism! My old bones are racked with rheumatism still."

"We got on very well together," said Honor, and did not explain that neither the Maid nor the Meadow entered into their conversation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

So the Duke lost his love, and yet kept her in some deeper way than is always understood by the rejected; for his ideal stayed with him, untarnished and imperishable, in the secret places of his heart.

Hours came to him in later years when he compared her worth with that of other women, eager to exchange their beautiful youth for his title and his diamonds—fair bargaining, as they understood it, but filling his poor foolish mind with shame. Honor alone could have seen below the surface of him, and when he heard the clang of the iron gate he left in that quiet garden all his hopes of home. His duty lay in the earth, the fine old mother of his race, and he went to his mother, as man goes in his extremity.

Thought of posterity troubled him little. Fate accounted for all, and arranged matters for its own working. He yielded himself obediently to her shears. Perhaps his astral sight showed him something of the worth of submission; perhaps he felt too old to struggle. In any case, he knew each moment of his life was no matter of accident, but meted to him by Necessity for her own divine ends. "All things work together for the Will of God," he told himself believingly, and went about his duty as energetically as before.

In days to come he found it some part of his

duty to train up his heir in the way he ought to go in the instinct of reverence for the place to which he had been called. Taught him, also, the grand lesson of austerity—to take little, give much, and expect nothing in return ; the lesson he himself had learnt in his humility, but which his heir learnt to honour in his wisdom. Duty, often hard, nearly always uninteresting, but duty to be done manfully without evasion or complaint.

So the Lords of Life and Death dispensed his dues to Robert Bruce, and he knew them for the wages he had earned through his own nature.

Age or honesty made the Duke of Northwyk less rebellious than was Dominick Blake, to whom in turn the wages of his work were paid. The one accepted with more or less philosophy the plain facts, and filled his mind with thought of sober duty. The other sat and looked at himself, and wondered why the face of his world seemed changed. Dominick added Evadne's silence to the loss of Honor, and found the total inadequate to the feelings in him. The change was in himself ; in the small suspicion that his feet were clay, that the glory of his godhood was departing from him.

Once again he made addition : his great desires ; the surety in his worth that kept him floating cork-like on the waters of his self-esteem ; his knowledge, snugly packed in convenient recesses in his memory—it made a fine-looking total, till he came to weigh it with his nothingness. These things, knowledge and the like, were put into him, poured into his empty shell ; not things innate, not proofs of his godhood. He seemed, to himself, like a sea-monster, blind, scaly, covered with the growth and the wash of the sea, gathering to himself the creatures of his element by unconscious attraction—here a limpet, there a knot of weed, sides fringed

with waving sea-flowers, washing in the trough of the waves—a dead self, living a fictional life through the life of its parasites. Dominick's terrors always took him back to the sea. He heard the soulless waves crying in his ears when he went down in deep waters.

It was no one's business to look after him. He resented Dr. Drury's cautious questions; was outraged beyond measure by his suggestion of overwork; clamoured, indeed, for more work, for something worth the doing; while his eyes told another tale in their overbrilliance, and his face grew thin, his look strenuous with the riot of emotions in him.

Dr. Drury left him ill at ease. He felt, absurdly enough, that to some extent he was the keeper of a younger, weaker brother, but a brother who resented both his youth and his weakness, and whom it was impossible to help by reason of his pride. There was a crooked strain in Dominick, in some sense a wrong blood-mixture, giving him Celtic guile as well as Northern stubbornness, hiding the real self as much from his own mind as from the outer world.

Dominick wrote much verse at this time, using rhyme and rhythm as a channel of self-expression. It was chiefly concerned with knotty points in theology, and descriptions of annihilation; pages of the feelings of the annihilated soul, that thing of nothingness so admirably able to tabulate all its sensations and its agony. One poem began rather proudly, with that sad pride which characterises the involuntary unbeliever: "Nought out of nought I came; Nought into nought again I go"—it read rather like the nightmare of a mad mathematician; but Dominick posted the revised copy to Honor, as a concise statement of his new mental position.

He proclaimed the poorness of the thing called "life" to Jaikes, Fielding and Hubbard, individually and collectively, and they responded after their kind.

"Lost your best girl?" said Jaikes, with well-meant sympathy; while Hubbard and Fielding, whose humour was coarse, clubbed supplies and gave him a box of much-vaunted liver pills.

"Lost his best girl, indeed," thought Dominick, sick and haughty at the mere suggestion. Evadne might be reft from him by the blows of Fate, snatched from the arms that never held her by a jealous god. When he came to think of it, there were passages between the original Evadne and Apollo, but she was as much a type of constancy as Penelope herself. Therefore, happen any happenings, she was more mislaid than lost.

As for the liver pills, they strewed the roof for the benefit of countless cats, instead of the hundred and one evils they were warranted to cure.

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His twenty-third birthday found him drowned in deeper gloom: so many more sands run out, nothing accomplished, nothing done; no sweat of his brow for sauce for his daily bread, no nearer finding himself than when he lay in his cradle without speculation as to the fate in store for him. He gave a sad party at his flat, and went to observe the idiotcies of life at the Empire, where the ballet somewhat cheered his drooping spirits. There was wistful pleasure in the rhythm of the swaying bodies, giving herself each one to the great audience; giving herself especially to him, thought Dominick, as he caught the glance of one particular girl again and again, and regarded her with gloomy attention.

And all the while he sat there in his comfortable stall, with a cigar of sufficient importance in his mouth to overpower those in his neighbourhood, watching through the smoke-wreaths the wonderful appeal of the body, part of himself escaped and went wandering on frosty heights, seeking his elusive essence. His lost soul companioned him in all his ways.

Yet, as Jaikes pointed out to him in an unguarded moment, it wasn't a matter of national importance whether he had a soul or not. Perhaps his evolution was not sufficiently advanced. They did not collect souls in the Egyptian Antiquities, whatever they did in Dominick's department of the Museum, or he would have done his best to supply a felt deficiency. In real kindness, he added, it was no use bothering; he never bothered—advice which Dominick found impossible to take.

He needed assurance, much as he needed it about his work. Only the gods can stand alone, and Dominick was of the earth earthly, none the less because his eyes were on the wide spaces of the stars. He could rise on the wings of another man's belief, feel warmed and cheered and comforted for a day if some chance-heard sentence, chance-found word, offered, or seemed to offer, spiritual proof. He had odd little superstitions connected with shadows, or the shapes of clouds; sometimes a picture or a statue served its end, lifting him to the skies, or plunging him into the bottomless pit. He had all the fantasies which torment the imaginative, all the inherent sorrow of his race, combined with the deep-seated fatalism of the dweller by the sea.

Somehow it seemed more difficult to think sanely on simple things in crowded London than in the clean, wind-swept country. London dust got up

and choked him, London miseries obtruded themselves on his understanding. All round him seethed the breeding tragedies of life—sin and sorrow mated with want, trailing their monstrous brood with them through the highways. And he, Dominick, or the shade that was Dominick, moved helpless amid these things. They stretched out frail arms to him, beckoning or pleading, and he passed by impotent on the other side.

Sometimes the world seemed made for nothing but a procession of Maries—Maries of all grades. Life was a joke of the gods, decency their dishonour. Then he dissected the thought, believed it original, even rather fine. Mary, in her way, was fine. He sighed for her completion—not for the baptism with which she had been baptized. Was there no way in which he could fulfil himself, find himself, make himself ?

As he walked the streets between his flat and the Museum, he turned his mind yet more and more in upon himself, speculating, adding, and subtracting. Was there no test by which he could assure himself; was his life—that life which seemed at once a weight of ages, and yet as short as a breath—but to be spent in heart-breaking speculation, while above sat the Makers of the great Mockery, laughing at his pain ? So, in all honesty it seemed to Dominick, who fashioned his gods in the likeness of a boy with a captive fly. The gods were stripping him of his wings.

Sometimes at night blind fear drove him to futile prayers, and, naturally, Baal was otherwise occupied than in attending. Sometimes a wild fit took him, when he felt he could spend himself recklessly, beginning with the demolishment of those lesser gods, the Authorities—planned rebellion, revolutionary speeches lava-hot. Then, pru-

dently, on two occasions went "sick" till the transient madness was overpast.

In truth, body and soul of Dominick were ill. Times and again he felt unable to help himself; let words slip through his brain without the power to hold them; understood questions only after he had given irrelevant replies; heard sentences dance like gnats about his head, while his mind went on speculating, speculating, hammering fresh nails in the coffin of himself.

"Of course, a man should understand himself as far as possible," said the sapient Jaikes; "but his work's his first duty." He spoke with the weight of five years' seniority; then cheerfully scamped his own as much as possible without a conscience-qualm.

But common everyday work was not enough for Dominick; even the new "Voyage of Bran" was insufficient. Like himself, Bran was looking for the kingdom of heaven, or its substitute; but Bran was more easily satisfied than he—which things be allegories, for Bran was a hero.

For a time Dominick haunted churches, seeking his soul's peace in pious forms, and returned uncomforted. He went to the Mother Church, sniffed her incense, and was uplifted by the music, which had the effect of runes on him; watched along the walls the procession of the Cross; carried his eyes past the winking fire of the candles to the holy Mother in her blue-and-white robes, bending with placid face to the brass vases and pots of growing fern; felt soothed to a sense of resignation, only to be damned anew by the sermon. He was so fresh to public worship that he could but listen. The priest hit straight from the shoulder, and Dominick guarded himself with contradictions. "Without faith shall no man enter the

kingdom," and faith was omitted in Dominick's making.

He dared not say to himself openly, "I do not believe," because in some mysterious way such open profession seemed to settle the matter for all eternity. Neither dare he look himself in the face and own his inability. He was neither intellectually nor morally honest; he was only entirely miserable. Sometimes the gods seem to take that way with the sons of men; before the creation of the new the old goes to its destruction. Dominick was hammered to pieces in many ways, and went on seeking out many inventions.

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Later came the publication of a slim book called "Ashes," referring less to the mighty dead than to his hopes. There was a fashion in morbid literature at the time, and one critic pronounced the narrow volume "dangerous." Dominick sniffed the flattery with wide nostrils. He had but expressed one phase of himself, and, with the publication, he sloughed that phase like another skin. Perhaps he was finding something of himself; in other words, forgetting something.

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Then, at long last, came a letter from Evadne. Three months' silence, Dominick counted, from the time he came back from Norton till the first snows of December whitened the roofs and melted into indescribable slush. He turned the envelope indifferently in his hands. The letter was brief and to the point. Evadne was engaged, with her parents' underlined approval; and Dominick must wish her joy, because theirs had never been a real engagement. Dominick noticed the incoherency,

also that she omitted the name of the man. Evadne was great at omissions; lacunæ cover a multitude of tiresome explanations.

It was not Captain Silver. He had gone the riding way of many loves; amused himself to legitimate limits, and departed without conferring curse or blessing, a very Laodicean lover. He had a wife and three small children in Hertfordshire, nicely out of the way of his minor amusements. This fact had influenced Evadne in the choice of her summer holiday. One knows she evaded the embraces of Apollo; and with her modern counterpart Mars came off but second best.

Down in romantic Cornwall, son of the soil, son of the quarries, the engineer shone in his great and noble light—the one true perfect love of Evadne's nineteen years. There was money in it; there was also blind infatuation; so was Evadne wooed and won.

But Dominick crumpled the letter, and cursed her with flattering bitterness; this was loss indeed! No jealous god, but a venial goddess, and Honor was his no longer. He had lost them both. Rage made him almost as incoherent, as triumph did Evadne.

He read "Ashes" again with fervour and bitter laughter. How true it was, so much truer now than he had thought it! He must congratulate himself on his escape.

Yet if impertinent questions had been asked at that moment, or if the habits of "best girls" had entered the discussion, the long, handy staircase, and Dominick's muscles, were ready for the inquirer. He felt it enough for that.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHEN the Norns who ruled Dominick's destiny bowed Evadne out of their design, there entered in her place the image of Mary. The procession of Maries acquired a new significance for Dominick: they seemed full, less of tragedy than of necessity. Sometimes the words are interchangeable.

Evadne, cheap as she was, had stood to Dominick for something more than himself; in her hands she held the greater part of his chivalry. Chivalry was Dominick's only safeguard; it was not that, for her, he kept his hands clean, as much as that with her soiling them became impossible.

And with her going went the last rag of respect he had ever felt for her, or for any woman. He was cheated out of the right of his youth, the right to believe in woman's honesty. He was cheated out of the thing he called his love, in whose name he had looked up to his ideal. He felt defrauded, weakened, in that he had not snatched his rights for himself. Cheated, because he had been a fool. No other woman should ever have the chance to cheat him, bleed him of his faith, strip him of his beautiful illusion. He knew the worth of women in his rage, the end for which the gods created them, the force of their attraction, the tie which drew men to them.

He talked less, and acted more, and his actions

were as indiscreet as they were avoidable. For once Dominick lost himself, let himself be carried beyond the point of analysis. Body ruled mind, self-control was in abeyance. He was not triumphant in his worship of the Black Venus; he merely supplied the present need of himself. He had been worsted in the eternal duel; he revenged himself unceasingly for that conquest. There seemed neither past nor future; there was only himself, with the imperative desires and gratification thereof. He had found a new self, a self that had grown alarmingly strong during years of unconsciousness; the boy had been cheated of his rights, the man made unrighteous war with his army of lusts and furies.

And with the new phase came the agony of self-reproach: not for his present mode of life—that was a necessity—but for the years he had spent with clean hands and a clean heart, for the sake of a lie. It was an unsuspected phase, for Dominick had deeps of reserve under his froth, and for a time burnt his incense to Evadne silently. Then he grew noticeably older, noticeably more sure of himself; the boy had put on man's armour naturally and unostentatiously. He worked at intervals: it was one of the last habits to leave him. He did not coarsen either in look or tone; he never was normal, for the common things which mark most men left him untouched. He handled some very black pitch without conspicuous defilement, and he kept so much sense of chivalry in him to forbid him to think of Evadne's share in the responsibility. He tried to put her from him, while he revenged on her sex the insult to his own.

He pointed out nothing to himself. Soon enough it all seemed horribly natural. Just as natural to burn his candle at both ends in illegitimate fashion

as to burn it in honour of wisdom. He walked about the streets, seeing, as well as feeling, the tiger in man; using his iron claws less, perhaps, with vile intent on others, than to rip a passage for himself from his own body. Something struggled to escape. And some vital essence or virtue of Dominick escaped from him in the agony of the struggle; leaped forward to its end, fulfilling its destiny. Perhaps was re-absorbed into the god who gave it.

Sometimes it occurred to Dominick that he had wasted much time and emotion over Evadne, many self-reproaches over Honor. It was, after all, comparatively simple to forget. Comparatively simple to keep the eye of the body single by fixing it solely on the body and its needs. But it was incomparably an expensive way of life. Dominick, by practical experience, was introduced to the harpies; he always had a leaning toward experimental classicism. He was, also, too inexperienced to see the necessity of selection. Desire swept through him like fire through corn-stubble, sparing neither flower nor weed.

After some time there was trouble with his landlord. Dominick's celebrations of his freedom were no longer conducted with discrimination. The musician below him, and the quiet mountaineer on his own floor, each made complaint. Something of the austerity of the frozen peaks tinged the mountaineer's accusation, something of the passion of Chopin entered into the conductor's protest. Twice the man of the mountains had been surprised at unconventional hours by the sound of high-pitched voices speaking strange things. The partition-walls were, unfortunately, thin. When otherwise disengaged, Dominick shot at prowling cats with a saloon pistol, and the shots disturbed the conductor more than the alleged irregularities.

Dickens Chambers was very respectable, and its rules were strict.

Dominick's interview with his house-gods was a short one. The verb to complain was conjugated thoroughly for his information; he also learned something regarding other tenants' privileges. A choice was offered him; but he did not promise amendment, for that was not his way. He recalled Mrs. Stone, and her manners and customs, and cast about him for another roof-tree. He told Jaikes he was moving, because the air was bad in Bloomsbury. Jaikes agreed, while he remembered it had taken Dominick a year to test its toxic properties, and coupled it with one or two things he had seen or heard of, and about which, with praiseworthy wisdom, he had held his tongue. Twelve months' practice had seasoned Dominick to the utterance of the harmless necessary lie. He lied with an open face.

No doubt the air was better in Chelsea. It was also less central in its situation; presumably, therefore, rents would be less. Dominick was in the throes of an amazing discovery. He found the limits of three hundred a year so pitiably insufficient to do things decently as he wished them done.

He moved to an inconspicuous part of Chelsea, and Miss Jaikes helped him to choose his wall-papers. She had an almost motherly feeling for the sinner hidden somewhere in the angles of her spinster person. She saw much and said little, and through her silence Dominick found himself treating her with a semblance of respect. He never tried to chaff Miss Jaikes in the light and airy fashion he used to some acquaintances. For one thing, she was so respectably ugly; Dominick thought virtue the saving grace of a skin like leather. And some-

where hidden in him was the knowledge that she knew, that she had some small store of wisdom of her own to draw on, and that, if she condemned him, she did not quite despise him.

But Miss Jaikes was only thinking of the waste of it all; the deadly sin in her eyes was waste. Some of her best work was done on odds and ends of paper, done merely to fill up a certain number of square inches, and avoid waste. And, in another sense, some more lasting work of hers was done on those odds and ends of humanity who are to be found misusing every good and perfect gift of their creation; but she could not interfere with Dominick's way of life. She troubled about him, and longed to be a man with the tongue of a woman for the time. He was just like a child to her in her riper wisdom, the kind of son the gods should have given her, whose confidence she would have won through some emotional kinship, whose black head even now she yearned to caress, and for whom she could have done much from the depth of the large heart that beat in her flat chest, and looked out of her little deep-set eyes.

The wall-papers chosen, Dominick had a housewarming for his visible friends—rather an entertainment of effrontery—and then subsided into less visible relations. He was only regular in his irregularity, and not much more cautious than he had been. It is very easy for anyone to go to the bad, anywhere—ingloriously easy, which is, perhaps, the reason why so many escape. But Dominick was one of the simpletons, driven on by the sudden oversetting of his ideal, neither excusing nor reproaching himself, simply blind in the grip of his new sensations.

His probation at the Museum was over, his appointment confirmed. It was no duty of the

Authorities to know how he spent his unofficial hours. They concerned alone himself and his conscience, so long as he seemed decent at the appointed time. And as Dominick kept one prejudice, the immortal, unshakeable prejudice, in favour of not looking like a fool, he acted his fool's part with that degree of circumspection which kept him out of official range.

There was no one else to care, no one to help or to offer help. Probably such offers meet with an unequivocal response, but the collective conscience is lightened of its keeper's load toward its brother by the overture. Advice, of course, is a prompting of conscience, a recognition of universal kinship, a discharge of family responsibility. Miss Jaikes could offer no advice, her nine-and-twenty years notwithstanding; nor, in view of Dominick's callers, could she go and see him without a chaperon. Sometimes Jaikes spread his protecting wing and went with her; but Jaikes had his own reputation to think of, and was attacked by the scruples which first accompany an engagement. He regulated his ways by Betty's imagined prejudices; and, hearing of Betty, Dominick laughed long and loud. He prophesied to Miss Jaikes in the twilight that "the poor old chap" would find himself jilted almost before he could kiss the girl. The indiscreet sentence explained much of Dominick, and Miss Jaikes would not listen to scornful strictures on his conduct. She was strong enough to pity him.

"I couldn't let Betty meet him," was the harshest thing Jaikes said; and with sisterly wisdom Miss Jaikes went on with a head in chalks and made no reply. For the fact was patent: Dominick's manners were sinking to the level of his morals, and were not to be tolerated save by the charitable few,

"He used to be such a nice boy," Miss Jaikes said sorrowfully to herself, but hardly whispered to herself the truth that he was "nice" no longer.

And with the going of that indefinite quality went other things, amongst them the old sense of split personalities, the consciousness that others watched and weighed his doings. Nothing mattered; that was his ticket-of-leave, his licence of escape from his prison house. Nothing, except being late for work, or forgetting quarter-day. He respected as far as possible these exceptions.

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When Dr. Drury came to see him, which happened a few weeks after his move, Dominick presented the bland face of the seasoned liar, and welcomed him to his new dwelling. His rooms were small, high up in a narrow red building; but out of a corner window there was a view of the grey river and misty trees. He underlined this view in his talk, importing it as an incontrovertible argument for his move. Dr. Drury accepted the argument without debate, wondered why he forced it out of season, and recognized it for one of those occasions when there is a time for silence.

"Better air here than in Bloomsbury," Dr. Drury remarked, and Dominick smilingly greeted his own argument. He put Dr. Drury's hat down on the oak chest, and hospitably offered him some whiskey. It was another Dominick than the one who gave the feast at Dickens Chambers, subtle differences marking look and tone in spite of effort to seem the same.

"Those trees will be beautiful in spring; even London contrives a spring," the doctor added. The bare branches waved naked arms in the wet wind. Dominick's window received the smoke

from the funnel of a passing steam-tug, Dr. Drury inhaled it with respect.

"This seems more familiar ground for you than the other place," he said. "We've often thought how you must miss your sea." He looked out over the long, grey reaches, across to the veiled trees of Battersea. "You must have missed your horizon lines," he added. "I think you've done well to shift." They conspired to find adequate reasons for a seemingly arbitrary move. Dominick said little, save by way of agreement; he mentioned casually his one-time wish to see old Chelsea; nothing of that disastrous fulfilment escaped his lips. Chelsea seemed the hiding hole of his secrets; he wondered if things were really secret from Dr. Drury.

The quiet eyes met his undisturbed. If it came to a rivalry of reserve, the older man could hold his own. He was quite natural, not unduly observant; it was Dominick's mind which made him suspicious. "He won't mention Honor," thought Dominick, with a queer lump in his throat; but the next minute Honor's name came naturally to the doctor's lips, coupled, accidentally, with the Duke. Dominick opened his mouth to ask a question, then thought better of it. Some boy's scruple stopped him from taking Honor's name in vain. And she seemed very far away, as far as the stars.

They discoursed pleasantly of art, not unpleasantly of books. Dominick produced the head of Jason, and entered into technicalities for his guest's benefit. "You can't rub out that red chalk," he said; "she always uses it, and I respect her for it." Dr. Drury respected her also; there is something worth cultivating in a woman who can afford to let her first thoughts stand.

"She's strong," said Dominick, with energy.

Dr. Drury wondered if envy rang in the tone. "At any rate, she has the courage of her convictions," he answered, and recognised the startling potentialities in the pictured face. Then the subject shifted, and Dominick inquired politely about the doctor's new book—the third volume of "National Character" was in the press, and in it there was much of Dominick himself. Then he attended to some minor criticism of "Ashes," and said he thought of writing a second series.

"Go on thinking," answered the doctor, without apparent malicious intent.

Dr. Drury accepted the gulf between them as the ordinary gulf between the old and the young. Spanning such should never come from the older side; it is the turn of youth to invite confidences, he felt that acutely. Attempted bridge-building is perilously like building a new Tower of Babel. Curiosity built the tower, and the result was confusion of tongues. Dr. Drury preferred to hold his, and with it his sympathy, in abeyance.

"You'll run down for your leave before long, won't you?" he said, as he took his hat from the oak chest.

Something enigmatical looked out of Dominick's eyes. "Not this leave, I think," he said, rather awkwardly. In a flash he felt he could not face Honor, in spite of unforgotten promises. "I rather want to run across to Dublin," he added. "I want to refer to some books in the original." It was the merest excuse, and he felt Dr. Drury knew it.

"Honor and I may take ourselves farther afield for a short time," Dr. Drury said; "the Duke has asked us both to go a cruise with him."

"I hope you'll all enjoy it," said Dominick, with a leaden heart.

But Dr. Drury knew there were rough edges in

Dominick. These were explained subsequently by the landlady, who had a regard for those who were under her roof, and rejoiced to find a lawful listener. Before he could stop her Dr. Drury heard from her fluent tongue tales of those goings on he more than half suspected : of the huzzies, a nomadic tribe, with whom Dominick had become acquainted, and half-tearful allusions to her own boy who had gone to perdition through their help. She talked, decorously as became a widow with sons of her own, unendingly as befitted her caste. Dr. Drury pitied the sons, and refused to listen to particulars about Dominick. His own imagination was more trustworthy than that of Mrs. Bryce.

"It's such a disgrace on my 'ouse," she said, with pride in her dingy bricks and mortar. Dr. Drury sized up the establishment—an old narrow house, tottering to its fall, far beyond the limits of artistic Chelsea, unsavoury of aspect, with odd news-sheets blowing in the area.

"Madam," he said, with astonishing politeness, "the remedy for that is in your own hands." But as her own hands fingered the rent, there appeared some hope for Dominick.

"I can't say but what it's crossed my mind," she retorted, like all the women he had known distrustful of him for his sardonic courtesy.

"I'm afraid I have no convincing reason to give you on the other side," Dr. Drury said, and raised his hat politely. Mrs. Bryce could have argued for another fifty minutes. She felt angry enough to give Dominick notice on the spot.

But Dr. Drury noted the fact in his memory, and sought about him for his convincing argument. His mind lighted on the Duke. He wondered if he would be persuaded to visit Dominick. All places were alike to him, and it was one of those

occasions when titles—the larger the better—are of conspicuous value. He smiled to himself as he remembered the change in Norton opinion since the advent of this Duke. He who had been a thorn in the side of its conventionality, was now near the rose, because of the privilege of ducal friendship.

"Poor old Bob; one must make use of him," said Dr. Drury, and wondered how the old man's tact would bear him through the trial.

"The boy is getting into the usual sort of scrapes," he told the Duke, without adornment. "He may be turned out of his rooms unless he can be bolstered up by large respectability, and he's an old friend of Honor's, and she would hate to have him come a cropper."

The Duke looked up quickly at Honor's name. "Did he tell you about it?" he asked.

Dr. Drury kicked the fire with a well-worn boot. "No; but he held his tongue in an unaccountable way. Also, his reasons for moving were too conspicuously reasonable. Caprice or necessity moves a boy of that age, not better air or the need of a wider outlook."

"And you want me to go?"

"Well, a duke is of some value still to landladies in democratic England; this one looked like a housekeeper, and would appreciate your worth. Also, you have never stood to Dominick in *loco parentis*—you understand? Poor child; how afraid he was of a heavy jaw! And if you would——"

"I'll stay a week in London," said the Duke firmly, with a long face. He avoided London at all times and seasons, and thought the Upper House a thing of evil; but Dominick had claims on his friendship through his own abiding friendship for the Drurys. "I'll go gladly," he added, and the swift aside came unconsciously as ever: "Vile hole,

my astral body suffers, suffers infamously." Then directly: "Shame to hound a boy down, even if he is one of the—the—— How do you like it put, Roger?"

"Shall we say of the wild asses, it seems to me to fit the need."

The Duke accepted the name ruefully; he would have put it kinder if he could.

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His appearance at Dominick's lodgings made a great stir, and completely reinstated the sinner in his landlady's good graces. There is an occult tie between virtue and the peerage, and the Duke traded on it for the good of others shamelessly. It was only when he saw Dominick that he blushed. Dominick had been out the first day he called.

Dominick was bored by the Duke, and a little inclined to be suspicious. It seemed like setting a spy on him, even when he reflected that the poor old man rarely saw more than the traditional inch before his nose, with all the added advantage of his astral sight. Besides, the Duke brought the vision of Honor unpleasantly near, though nothing was said of weddings or congratulations. He thought the Duke tactless when he observed, "Possession is not the real test of love; it's the loving," and seemed to hint that he understood Dominick's mind, the loss of Evadne, and all that followed that loss. It seemed mockery for the successful lover to ape the manners of the rejected, even if the imitation were the result of sympathy. Dominick changed the subject abruptly from lost loves to things of greater weight, and wondered why the Duke seemed only kind, and not impertinent. Dominick was ever ready to suspect impertinences.

And the Duke was deeply interested in "Bran"—

not much advanced by four or five months' work—and impressed by "Ashes"—Dominick gave him a copy, and wrote his name in it—and from the deeps of his years, raked up parallels for the one and excuses for the other, till Dominick in desperation realized that he had done nothing either new or wonderful in his career, but had followed with docility in the footsteps of tradition, even in painting the town as red as his means allowed.

The Duke produced so many heroic figures: from the East and from the West they came in their legions, mighty hunters before the Lord of Life, and full of mighty deeds. He instanced forgotten unworthies and their cheerful customs, dating from the beginning of the world. Dominick had forgotten there is nothing quite so old as wrong, unless it be right.

Followed in quick succession tales of India, many and unsavoury; then reminiscences of the Duke's law days, spent in divorce court work, unsavoury again. Dominick's exploits began to look pitiably common; even a little unclean.

By and by the Duke consulted him frankly. "So you think my 'Recollections' would be worth recording?" he asked, while Dominick calculated the number of sins to the square mile of his guest's travels, and the Duke spoke as a novice to a writer on the edge of fame. "It's very kind of you to think so—very kind, indeed. For, you see, I have only seen life's commonplaces, have I?"

"Commonplaces?" echoed Dominick, with his mind's eye on the lurid record; his ears a little red, his mind more than a little uncomfortable.

"Surely sin is a commonplace," returned the Duke.

Dominick pondered the statement; in the light of a fine revenge some sins are gilt, but the Duke

seemed to think their foundations of one clay—unhealthy, inartistic, worthless. The trinity humiliated him.

The Duke left a rehabilitated and somewhat humbled Dominick at 00a, Plane Gardens.

CHAPTER XXX.

NUMBER 00a, Plane Gardens smiled pleasantly on Dominick, and removed from his shoulders certain disabilities which aforetime had tormented him. The landlady sent the little slavey scurrying at his call, his boots were cleaned without protest, and his papers were left him undisturbed. For his sake she neglected the students of St. George's Hospital, for they knew not Dukes. None came to call on them four days in one week, as that high and mighty magnate, the Duke of Northwyk, came to call on Dominick. The utmost they could produce were a few respectable but untitled colonels, and such-like unimportant people. Dominick shone, and his rooms were dusted on occasion, for dukes were unused to dust, and it behoved Mrs. Bryce, through the agency of Gwendoline, to respect this high-placed prejudice.

But at Dominick's age the Duke was acquainted with greater depths of poverty, and perhaps then acquired the taste for porridge which lasted him all his years. He had a world-wide reputation of living on crowdie and cold water.

He haunted Dominick throughout the week—a week of suffering to both. Dominick squired him round the Museum ; it took a long time, for explanations were protracted by much questioning ; went

with him to the theatre, a thin and pleasant play, full of lively patriotic sentiment, and thronged with virtuous artizans, in whom the Duke believed with all his heart; and wished, half-enviously, that he could be as simple and child-minded as the man he half despised. And the Duke did his duty, as he saw it, cheerfully, doing a thousand more things than a brother would have done, reaping no reward nor looking for it. For his foolish old heart was soft toward the young: he saw the pathos of their position, the pity of their pride. Saw it, too, through his own clear, simple sight, without envy or malice; not, as Dr. Drury did, as a phase to be analyzed, but in the love of the brethren which covers a multitude of sins.

"And we was wondering what relation 'is Grace might 'appen to be to you, sir," Mrs. Bryce said on two or three occasions; and each time Dominick assured her fervently that he was none at all. Whereby arose strange legends, not all to ducal credit; but then there are always two sides to every question. At any rate, it was not Dominick who suffered. His late shortcomings were leniently eyed; such things might be hereditary—who knows? Not the landlady, for all her suspicions; not her confidante next door but two, who also entertained the stranger within her blistered portals. But great is the stimulus of speculation, and they speculated till their wonder grew, and the poor old Duke, a clean liver from his youth up, bore on his thick shoulders the sins of Peter Blake.

And Dominick rose early, and took his rest rather later than is usual to working manhood, burning the candle improvidently, in spite of warnings. He had a secret pleasure in his own disreputability, child of that thrill Evadne roused by her suspicions concerning him. Then he had been potentially

wicked, potentially a thing for girls to fear. Now he had achieved the thing itself it amused him to see how girls regarded him, even how Emma Jaikes avoided him, poor, unattractive thing. And it was a girl who had done him this damage!

He met Evadne once, and fury leaped to his heart. She was walking down Sloane Street, with a respectable little woman in a bonnet, obviously the mother who had ambitions for her. Evadne eyed Dominick, as was her custom with the passing man. Not one escaped the modest glance, or neglected the look. Six months had changed Dominick, made him older, improved him almost out of recognition in her eyes. His look met hers with effrontery. All the evil that was in Dominick rose to the surface and looked out of his eyes at her. Evadne piously recognized her escape, and gave providence its due. She had been right in dreading him—right, above all, in jilting him; a woman owes a duty to herself—let the man go hang.

She also noticed that he was just a thought shabby: hardly perceptibly so, but not quite the well-turned-out boy who lectured at the Gaelic League, or who took her down first class to Hampton Court. On the whole, that had been a happy day. What had he called her, thought Evadne, as she went down the street without even a passing bow: "*A cuisle geal mo chroidre!*" It was delightful to have been the bright pulse of a man's heart; it was still more delightful to choose the petticoats for one's trousseau, three-frilled affairs of many colours. And hats, and frocks. Evadne twisted round on her finger the diamond half-hoop placed there by Peter Rudd. He had not called her "*a cuisle geal mo chroidre*;" he had kissed her with emphasis, and promised her a dozen more rings before

the year was out, and a little gold one into the bargain. Such wooing was definite, and easily understanded of the people. And Peter Rudd was thirty-seven, and his income surpassed Dominick's as much as did his knowledge of the world. And Evadne flitted down Sloane Street out of Dominick's life in her delightful pursuit of shopping. She did not return his ring; it was a pretty one, and kept the other company on her slim finger.

And Dominick watched her go, saw as in a vision the procession of might-have-beens glide out of his life; ghost-like, but sure, returning whence they came into the limbo of lost chances. "How could any sane man compare her with Honor?" he asked himself indignantly; for larger knowledge had taught him comparison, and the way to measure the glance of a woman's eyes. He saw Evadne now without illusion, and in his mind she was but another Mary without the honesty of the original. His thought was all evil, of lost chances with her; he sneered at himself for his lost modesty. Dominick had grown to despise the old self which had gone its way with other illusions.

In the education of fools it seems necessary to know evil before one can appreciate good. At any rate, Dominick knew now the worth of Honor as he had never known it before—just Honor, straight as a die, innocent with the wide innocence of understanding, wise through her heart and brain—and realized, too, the fire that burns in snow. But he stood so far off from her, it was useless calling.

Despair took hold of him, and with despair came the fighting blood, driving him through sheer dread of himself to wilder extravagances. The evil that brooded in him took active form. An imperative spirit urged him on to deeds best done in the dark.

They were dark hours to Dominick, as dark as the

winter which ushered them in; nor did they lighten with the growing length of days when the winter was overpast, and the almond-trees began to blush in the squares, and the lilacs to push their green shoots through their sooty sheathes again. Always at the turn of the year fresh energies are making fresh results; spring woke in Dominick to his undoing. He took a holiday, and looked about him for something he might do. He had exhausted many sensations, so it seemed to him, and yet his appetite was whetted for more. Sometimes it seemed that he did evil of necessity, had got into the habit of it; at other times it seemed the only way to live one's life.

A slight altercation with the police led to unexpected results; Dominick found law and order something more than fiction. Law laid a heavy hand on him, and order demanded his appearance before one of its minor tribunals. The boy's folly had its price to pay.

The magistrate was not a humorist: he was occupied with the majesty he represented; besides, after a lively youth, he expiated his sins by judicial severity. He dismissed Dominick with a caution, and it seemed to the boy that prison would be easier to bear. The grey hairs of his parents were invoked, almost in French fashion; he was bidden to take heed to his ways, to take care, and, again, redundantly, to be careful. Several nice little judicially injudicious terms were flung at him, and he felt as if all the reporters were taking down every word—felt, too, the infinitely poor figure that he cut, bereft of speech, argument, understanding, simply standing up to be pelted with words, meaningless words, to which he was deaf. He heard a sycophantic chuckle, frowned down by the man of no humour; heard the whispers of an idler or two.

One tattered woman called him a "pretty boy;" he was alive to the people who stared, not alive to the polysyllabled warning—that escaped his ears.

He noticed how dusty the police-court was; the long hair of a reporter over-near him, engaged, no doubt, in dishing-up some of those brief and bright "Kernels of the Courts," which are to be met with by the curious in such literature.

Then came the valediction, and Dominick escaped; looked to right and left as if for pursuit, and bolted to the nearest point of refuge. To Dominick it was not the kind of performance to be treated as a joke, dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders. He felt as if branding irons had been applied. Bravado clothed him no longer; its garment is less elastic than that of charity. He had been treated like a dog—not as a dog of a superior and enviable breed, but the mongrel kicked with contumely to its gutter. He was lowered irretrievably in his own eyes, made to look a fool in the eyes of others—a thing of no worth, liable to be sacked from his appointment; a fool who had thrown up his prospects for the price of his folly. But he stood and looked at himself from another point of view as well—looked, as a man may look, at a dead self in his dreams. Saw the goal to which the one had set his face, and the one to which the other self drew near. "A criminal," he told himself, without his usual care for finer shades of meaning; and despised himself unhealthily, most of all because his memory was treacherous and he did not remember all that he had said and done.

Then wondered how "the thing" would read in next day's—this evening's—papers; again filling the world with himself and his very insignificant case. "The prisoner felt his position acutely"—a lie, he would swear it was a lie. If such a thing

were said, it would be his duty to disprove it by a larger row. He tested his muscles, and approved them in his mind. Perhaps there might be a leader on educated rowdies and their influence on the Hooligans. He writhed at the thought. Sometimes such things were copied into local papers; he might meet himself in print in the *East Coast Seaboard* —Honor would see it, too.

He wandered on, with the dread of publicity as companion. No Museum demanded his presence, for he was enjoying a week's leave. He thought it quite possible that he had paid his last visit to those respectable pillars of the nation; but in the meantime he was free from the personal comments of Hubbard, Jaikes, and Fielding. He counted up the moments of his freedom, wondered if he would be allowed to retire of his own free will, or if that grace would not be granted him. Then turned up Sloane Street aimlessly.

A light rain fell, dimming rather than damping the pavements; the outlook seemed blurred, there was no edge to anything. The streets looked like one long greasy smear, the house-roofs melted into shadows. Dominick passed the lighted shop-windows hurriedly. The flowers in Doré's window—great branches of white lilac, lilies-of-the-valley in pots, sun-striped tulips in big boxes—seemed to point accusingly. Perhaps the pretty girl now arranging buttonholes of carnations in the window would read about him to-night. Such a sordid little tale, such a pitiful adventure, yet written so large in Dominick's imagination.

He went further up the street; past the stalls of Vanity Fair, now meetly shrouded for the night, with scarcely a glance in their direction. Observation seemed in abeyance, as it is with obsessed people. He saw nothing but the accusing figure of

himself, pointing out the way of his own destruction. It was not that his own shamefulness struck him ; sin seemed beside the mark. It was his folly and his vulgarity which laid hands on him, much as the policeman laid hands on him—when was it —an æon or two ago, or only yesterday ?

He seemed to himself to have aged enormously in the interval, to look back through centuries of knowledge, worldly knowledge of the kind which ages a man most quickly. He felt he would not be surprised to find his black head grey in the morning, grey through his own stupendous folly.

The thought accompanied him as far as Knightsbridge. He crossed the street blindly, to the tune of warning shouts. It didn't seem to matter much what happened to him ; perhaps it was a pity the 'bus drivers knew so well how to handle their cattle. No friendly automobile came his way ; they hooted with discretion and avoided him. Dominick turned into the Park by the French Embassy. Blue-bloused workmen were leaving their work, apparently ambassadorial alterations and repairs. It seemed as though all the French workmen in London had congregated there, or, perhaps, they were special importations for the occasion. They all looked cheerful, probably because they were leaving work ; but Dominick thought they smiled derisively from their smug and respectable heights. They looked at him—his face was sufficiently miserable to call attention to itself even in blind London—climbed on their respective 'busses, and vanished. Dominick walked on.

The road was spongy, and he walked through much sloppy mud on his way to the Marble Arch. Spectres kept him company. He wondered if they haunted the carriages, and sat beside the women in their jewels, laying ghostly fingers on their brooches

and ouches, drawing to themselves something of the glamour for which their lives had paid the price.

Dominick thought of Tyburn tree, and the procession of horrors which were the invisible witnesses to his shame. Here, perhaps, once stood the tavern where the criminal took his last drink, the merciful draught of wine, spiced for his physical support—remembered to have read, in some forgotten paper, the measured dose of brandy now given in its stead. The air was thick with horrors—struggles for life on the scaffold, blind fear, or blind blasphemy, ruffling it gaily to the end—so many tragedies, so much suffering. Remembered it with the apathy of a beaten man. Nothing seemed to matter very much.

Once, long ago, things seemed to have significance; there was a boy called Dominick, who thought himself able to do great things in this world. He laughed aloud at the thought. Who knew the significance of things? The gods laughed, laughed in derision. Men sat in stuffy police-courts, and rebuked without understanding. Gods and men alike were a mistake. He longed to rid himself of this grisly farce called life. Then slouched on, under the dripping trees.

The soft, wet air of night whispered to his unheeding ears; he heard the sigh of the wind in the trees, felt the light rain run over him. Remembered, too, in some trick of memory, how streaked and black his hands had become when in some mood of nature-worship he had held them out to the blessed rain. Remembered standing under those same trees, with the round moon sailing away in the infinite reaches of the sky, a boat on a sea of space. Memory played him another trick, pushed into the foreground of his thoughts a stray scrap of Cymry mythology: the boat of the moon; remem-

bered the symbol, a cup enclosing a triangle, and ran rapidly over corresponding symbols in Ireland. He wondered if such memories came to all men, even to those on their journey to a shameful death. Wondered what ghosts haunted Sixteen-String Jack, Jack Sheppard, and the rest of them. Wondered if their short lives were the merriest ; whether excitement compensated them more than he knew.

At any rate, they were more admired than derided. A great criminal stands on the level of a great saint in his rarity, and as such is worth the cherishing. Dominick remembered how the law nurses back to life the criminal for the justice of hanging him on his complete recovery. His vagrant mind played with all the horrors that rule man.

Then he walked on again to the place where the groups of lanterns beckon the curious in Socialism, creeds of sorts, and the many inventions of man. Dominick's feet led him through the restless spirit in his heart. A big policeman or two kept with discretion in the background. For the rest, the sodden earth was trampled with the marks of many feet—feet of those who came to listen and pass on, with, perhaps, the tag of a sentence clinging bat-fashion to their dusty brains. Dominick listened inattentively. He heard the faint echoes of one-time deep-lunged sayings : echoes of the fine old fighting days, when the Chartists, with a parson at their head, were bent on creating a new heaven out of a very grimy earth. The earth remained, and the fulness thereof in the same hands as heretofore ; but the spirit had gone from the speeches ; only the empty sound remained.

Abuse, as Dominick knew from his police-court experience, is not argument : anyone with power abuses him who has it not ; whether it be the parson

in the pulpit, the magistrate on the bench, or the reformer of many adjectives on a Park chair. He moved away, to be caught by a troop of ardent gospellers, singing through the fine rain; noticed how it blurred the light of their lettered lantern, but did not choke their song. There were five singers and four listeners—it seemed a waste. And the gods were laughing, Dominick knew, nor realized that their sense of humour is the preservation of the world. A man would break it in fragments, like the shards of a potter; the gods laugh, knowing the end thereof.

He passed on, with the strident "Glory, glory, glory" ringing in his ears. He looked back over his shoulder, showing his teeth much as an otter shows them when the pups are at her heels. Then drifted, footsore, to the next variety show.

Here social questions were discussed, and he heard a piquant Cockney abstract of a parallel to his own career. Also, descriptive adjectives which pelted him like bricks. The speaker knew his subject to the bone, perhaps from variegated personal experience. The ways to hell are wonderfully alike, fancy paints them differently, that is all. Dominick recognized himself in almost every phrase; the fool's-cap fitted him to perfection.

Out in the open, with the impersonal parable sounding in his ears, it was easier to see himself as others saw him, than when an obtuse and wordy magistrate hammered him with moralities. The open-air speaker dealt with such as he with Spartan brevity; he had the grace of short sentences and Saxon words amid his telling argot. The gist of his speech was easy of understanding. As their parents didn't drown such folk in childhood, and as they took up the standing-room of better men, society should provide for their use the same sort of lethal

chamber that was provided for stray dogs. He instanced the precautions taken by the Greeks for the survival of the fittest, pointed out the duty of the modern citizen with regard to decadence, mentioned the propagation of their species, and traced the pedigree of the breed.

Dominick listened, inattentively at first; then, in spite of himself, followed the argument. The rain fell softly, just as it falls on new-sown seed for its better germination. Dominick had been told that he was "leprous" in the morning by magisterial lips, but the adjective made not one quarter the impression made on him now. He had never questioned before his right to his existence —he met the question here. Once again within him rose the passionate need for self-surety, the awful feeling as of one who walks on water, seeking foothold and finding none. What was the speaker saying?

The harsh, throaty voice spoke to him, not as did the gospellers, telling him to come out of Egypt and be cleansed, but commanding him in the name of humanity to purge the earth of his presence. It was a lecture on the citizen's duty of suicide; its text, "Why cumbereth he the ground?"

The voice went on. Dominick watched the play of the lean fingers tearing at the dingy neckcloth; heard the rasp of the voice leaping an interval, and clearing again in a higher key. The speech grew autobiographical, apologetic, explaining the speaker's own existence. He preached submission at the top of his voice, in the intervals of anecdote.

The man, Dominick told himself, that man raised a foot or two above his kind on an orange-box, with the wavering light of a candle-lantern shining on his eager face, had tried to solve the riddle of his life by suicide. He spoke of it without appear-

ance of emotion. He had thrown himself over the Clifton Suspension Bridge, and the half tide and the wide mud-flats had been the salvation of him. "I didn't think of aught going through the air, it was so quick-like; but while I was in the 'orspital I had time to sort things out; and, mates, I learnt my place was here, after all. I gave God His chance, and He showed me." He seemed neither proud nor ashamed of it; he felt he had been shown, that was all. Nothing of subsequent proceedings, no allusion to bodily penalties, though one sleeve hung empty.

Simply he gave God a chance, and God took it. If Dominick gave God a chance, would He take it likewise?

CHAPTER XXXI.

LONG ago, whatever his mood in his boyhood, the sea beckoned Dominick. Whether he knew it in the winter of its anger or the gentle laughter of its sun-kissed ripples it spoke to him in no uncertain voice. As he made his way through the blind, rainy night, he heard its cry in his heart.

It called to him as an enemy, yet more kindly than a friend. It spoke through its wide purity to the stains within him. The tide of his life seemed running with the tide of the sea. He took the fantastic notion—to-night all thoughts seemed shapes—played with it, remembered with his fatal memory so many legends of its lives and moods. But none saw the sea as he saw it, because she has a new face for each of her children, an individual language for each soul. And Dominick felt as a rebellious child toward his great mother, one who had struggled against her queenship, revolted from her universal motherhood. To-night he felt within him the call as from a human mother's lips.

He heard it calling across the bending trees of the Park, in the roll of wheels along the streets, in the lash of the driving rain. Bent his head to listen closely ; heard it more insistently. It seemed to woo, to menace, to command. He wondered if great singers heard its voice as he did, irresistibly

sweet, and so evoked syrens and strange-haired merrows; not from its depths, but out of their own deep sight. The sea needed no merrow, no syren to sing for her; her voice was heard in the plash of the waves ashore, the musical thunder of the surf, the roll of the breakers. And oh, the voice was weariful, weary of its strength, its majesty; weary, as Dominick was weary, of puzzling life.

No longer she seemed to him to beat her heart out in futile questioning, rather to lie in great helplessness, waiting the word of release. Dominick's heart ran out in sorrow to his enemy the sea. In her arms there seemed a strange anodyne for his pain, some soothing poppied draught to hush the tumult in him, depth below depth of oblivion for his folly and his shame.

He wandered about, hardly knowing where he went, or what he did, walking off the turbulence of his mind. Remembered nothing of his wanderings through the maze of countless streets, furtive houses bending overhead, closely shuttered to reserve the secrets of their way of life. It was strange to Dominick how everything inanimate seemed endowed to-night with a travesty of life, pressing on his imagination its hideous secret vitality. He found himself in his own rooms, not knowing the paths by which he came there; his door was open, as it were, to welcome him. It was still early though he had spent almost an eternity outside.

"I would like to see the old place again," he found himself saying, as he listened to the wind moaning round the roofs, and thought he heard in it the distant wailing of the sea. He opened his bureau, with some indefinite thought of secrecy, and tossed out the contents on the dusty carpet. Among the red labels, the string, and the crumpled bills lay Honor's photograph—that ghost portrait

he had taken in the gloaming two years ago and to which he had no right.

"Of course, the Duke ought to have it," he murmured, hardly knowing what he said. He must straighten things out, put something right, before he made himself understand the intangible intention at the back of his mind. "Honor!" He repeated the name thoughtfully, and the fantasy of his mind took the word and played with it. How clearly she stood before him to-night—an avenging ghost! He had thrown away honour in a double sense, and she condemned him with those straight, grave eyes. He turned the card over, so that her eyes met his no longer; no longer questioned him, as the eyes of her mother had questioned him in childhood, asking of him the faith of his manhood, answering the while she questioned the riddle of his life.

Faithless, dishonoured, broken, Dominick read his fate. It was as though the mother took his nerveless hands and made him fold away the face he had despised; fold away for ever the face that haunted him; still for ever the true pulse of his heart which had throbbed so faithfully for him.

The last train took Dominick, blind through lack of food and rest, down to Norton. Darkness covered the land on his arrival, the chill darkness that foreruns dawn. The fury of the wind had given place to a great silence, that supreme silence of the shore when the sea lies asleep waiting her resurrection with the dawning day. Dominick walked from the station along the known levels of the road; here he and Honor returned from Brackney Fair. Up yonder on the waste ground above him—a long, dark shoulder hunched toward the dawn—had stood the tents and waggons with their naphtha torches smoking to the sky. What

infinity of time aged Dominick. Life seemed to have ended there for him. He remembered, with a curious sharpness, his emotions, his curiosity, disgust and shame.

Further on the wide fields beckoned him, as he tramped with the determination of despair. The first faint dawn-shaft ran like a livid finger along the murky sky. There stood the cottage, meetly shrouded for the night, facing him with unrecognizing curtained eyes. He wondered how the new tenants fared, whether they would ever think of the boy whose home it had been—pity him, perhaps. Yonder stood the church, behind the bent hornbeams and wry-backed oaks; he noted each landmark by some other sense than sight. Yonder, again, dimly visible in the morning mists, the long road wound away to Castle Northwyk. He drew in his breath quickly, and fumbled in his pockets for the photograph. Something told him then that the end was at hand.

Past the silent forge, where the taint of burnt horn and singed horsehair seemed to hang on the purity of the dawn, just as shame hung on a man in spite of penitence; and yet Dominick knew he was not truly penitent—he was paying a debt, that was all.

He stood at last at the gate of Bullen's Farm, looking through the intricacies of the ironwork into the dim, grey garden. Memory was more than he could bear; a little cry broke from his whitened lips. Only silence greeted him, the eternal silence of his own despair. He leaned on the dividing wall, driving his hands into the close-shorn ivy-weight. Sparrows in their legion scattered from their beds; everything seemed to fly before him. He took out the envelope again; scribbled a line or two across its blank face, swung open the iron

gate, missed the familiar creak as it swung easily over the great flagstones, and stood again in the breathless silence of the garden.

Each shrub, bent with raindrops, seemed to hang its sorrowful head in his presence; each leaf to point some moral lesson he was too indifferent to heed. He passed on to the crumbling terrace, where the budding briars clung with thorny fingers. Everything seemed so endowed with the energy of life, except himself—he, the leper, who stood with his feet on the threshold of death.

Dominick went up the steps, and stood on the broad-flagged pathway below the house. Memory stood there, too. Here he had boasted to Honot of the glories of his future, here proclaimed himself a god, with the kingdoms of heaven and earth within his grasp. And the steady wheel had turned, bearing him here again. No longer he felt as if furies drove him; he was simply in the grip of his destiny, webbed by himself, bound by himself, the master of his own fate.

He looked at the envelope, reading the writing in the growing light. Again, the paucity of his words struck him; emotion strangled expression: Let it go. What matter if she never knew, never weighed the weight of his heart that day. Somewhere yonder the sea beckoned him, holding out white arms—calling, calling with the incoming tide.

He threw the letter up to the low window, where it lodged on the sill; then knelt for a moment on the gravel path. Something broke from his heart then that had no thought of self. In that moment Dominick stood purged of the great offence.

* * * * * *

With the dawn the earth was wrapped in a wind-

ing sheet of mist, shrouding the long marshes, the dunes, and the distant mere. Dominick beat his way through the enfolding arms. Yonder the sea beckoned him; he remembered nothing else. Yet within himself his busy brain was calculating, measuring the moments, till the tide was high.

He reached the big tarred gate, swung open wide on its broken hinges, and set his feet on the spongy mosses of the marsh. Once again it was webbed invisibly from end to end by patient spinners of threads. One brushed across his face, a film caught in the hanging mist; he swept it away mechanically. He could hear the soft murmur of the sea behind the dunes. The way of the path came familiarly to his accustomed feet by the tussocks of sword grass and the trickle of the tiny stream; he stumbled on the lift of the first sand-hill. The mists swept, white-winged, intense in chilly purity, between. From the distance, heavy on the sodden air, rang out the hour of the church clock: the world would soon awake to the business of another day. There came to his ears the first well-nigh inaudible sounds of waking life—the lift of a plover from its nest in the heavy grasses, the patter of running sheep waked by some sound from their fold, the deeper note of the marsh-bred cattle lowing from their byre, the piercing crow of the cocks waking the dawn.

He stumbled on over the heavy sand between the dunes—now up, now down, now with the harsh marram grasses striking across his feet; now with the soft sand yielding beneath him. All round the sea-fret hung in the chill air, white wings, heavy wings, the feathers of death brushing his face. He stood below the high dune where as a boy he had dug himself a cave; threw himself down on the sand, and for a moment hid his face. There was no thought

of prayer in his heart; his last prayer was for Honor. "God keep her," he had said in his heart on the lonely terrace.

Death called to him in the murmur of the sea—death benign as a necessity, drawing nearer with the gaining tide. He listened to the sea; so often had he swum at daybreak far out toward the horizon line. He scarcely wondered what was his goal to-day. He watched his death draw nearer to him through the white-winged mist, heard the inevitable footfalls on the sand, listened as though to the tread of some deliverer. Then folded weary hands on wearier heart, waiting.

And in the long patience that he suffered he cast away the old Dominick, and in the baptism of his agony a new soul was born. Pain the purifier wrapped him to her heart of fire, burning away the dross. Faith the healer laid her hands upon his heart. Sin, sorrow, and fear flew away in the long reaches of the mist. God spoke to a naked soul through the fear of death, wiping out that fear; and humbly as a little child Dominick held his soul in his hands. Nearer crept the stealthy tide, murmuring musically; lower drooped the wings of the mist over the lonely dunes.

He heard the cry of a gull, flying in-shore in search of food; felt the sweep of its soft wings over his blinded face; listened to the flutter and the plaintive cry as it escaped. The mist closed round him; physical exhaustion laid hands on him, numbing the hurrying thoughts, giving him a foretaste of the blessed sleep. Dimly he felt himself floating—floating out of consciousness on a broad ocean of oblivion. He gave himself up to the spell. Only so could atonement be made to the beautiful earth he left. He did not pray for forgiveness; he knew he was understood at last. Still the stealthy

sea crept nearer, still the mist drew her shroud more closely round him, in her mercy blindfolding his eyes.

* * * * * *

Far away sounded a thin voice calling; he heard it with some other sense than hearing; it seemed to thrill through the mist into the centre of his being. The first ripple of the sea broke at his feet, in wavering course up the level beach. Then came the cry again, the cry as of a mother to her wandering child—piercing the mist with the keenness of a blade. "Dominick! Dominick! where are you?" His tongue was held by his weakness, yet within his heart leaped the flame of a mighty joy. Again came the cry—nearer, nearer through the all-enfolding mist, passionate with all the fervour of a prayer. And still he could not answer for the lethargy which tied his tongue. The little waves were rippling round his feet, testing him. He welcomed the touch of their cleansing hands, while his ears leaned into the mist for the support of the voice he heard. And his heart broke into prayer that God should have His will of life or death.

* * * * * *

And with the prayer the morning broke over the sea, scattered the mists far and wide in the glory of the risen sun. Dominick saw Honor, with her hair unbound, come close to him across the sand-hills, her bare feet scarcely touching the sand.

"Dominick!" she cried, with the rose of the dawn and its glory on her face.

And Dominick turned to meet the Will of God, who gave him life in the new making of His day.

THE END.

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